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Vol III

HULSEAN LECTURES

FOR THE YEAR 1831.

THE

VERACITY OF THE HISTORICAL BOOKS OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT,

FROM THE CONCLUSION OF THE PENTATEUCH, TO THE
OPENING OF THE PROPHEETS,

ARGUED FROM THE

UNDESIGNED COINCIDENCES

TO BE FOUND IN THEM, WHEN COMPARED IN THEIR SEVERAL PARTS :

BEING A CONTINUATION OF THE ARGUMENT
FOR THE VERACITY OF THE

FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES.

BY THE REV. J. J. BLUNT,

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PREFACE.

PERHAPS the title-page might suffice to explain to my readers, so far as they may concern themselves about it, my motive for choosing, as the subject of these Lectures, that portion of Scripture which is here brought under their notice, and only that portion—if not, one word more will be enough.—Having already, on another occasion, delivered before the University a similar course of Sermons upon ‘the Evidence for the Mosaic Writings;’ on being appointed to the Hulsean Lectureship, I thought the argument fell precisely within the conditions of Mr. Hulse’s will, and I therefore determined, in the discharge of that office, to carry on the like investigation through some of the succeeding Books of Scripture, with the like object.—Thus, the volume becomes (what I could have wished otherwise) a continuation of a former work, rather than a whole in itself. The same explanation must serve for the form in which it is printed, and

which differs from that of previous volumes of Hulsean Lectures; though indeed the reduction in the number of Sermons, from twenty to eight, would have otherwise rendered some such change necessary.

For the nomination to the Lectureship, unsolicited, my acknowledgments are due to Dr. Wood, the Master of St. John's College; as well as to the two other Trustees, for their approval of that nomination: Dr. Thackeray, Provost of King's, the Vice-Chancellor; and Dr. Wordsworth, the Master of Trinity College. I shall be happy if they think that I have not disgraced their choice; that I may have been the means of exciting a still greater curiosity to *search* the Scriptures, amongst the students of the University; with a view to whose instruction these Sermons were written and preached, and to whose further consideration (may it be to their profit!) they are now committed.

SUBSTANCE OF CERTAIN CLAUSES IN THE WILL
OF THE REV. I. HULSE, M.A.

[Dated July 21, 1777.]

HE founds a Lectureship in the University of Cambridge.

The Lecturer to be a ‘ Clergyman in the University of Cambridge, of the degree of Master of Arts, and under the age of forty years.’ He is to be *elected annually* ‘ on Christmas-day, or within seven days after, by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, and by the Master of Trinity College, and the Master of St. John’s College, or any two of them.’ In case the Master of Trinity, or the Master of St. John’s, be the Vice-Chancellor, the Greek Professor is to be the third Trustee.

The Duty of the said Lecturer is, by the Will, ‘ to preach *twenty* Sermons in the whole year,’ at ‘ Saint Mary’s Great Church in Cambridge;’ but the number having been found inconvenient, application was made to the Court of Chancery for leave to reduce it, and *eight* Sermons only are now required. These are to be printed at the Preacher’s expense, within twelve months after the delivery of the last Sermon; and the present volume is the first that has appeared under the new regulations.

The subject of the Lectures is to be ‘ the Evidence

for Revealed Religion; the Truth and Excellence of Christianity; Prophecies and Miracles; direct or collateral Proofs of the Christian Religion, especially the collateral arguments; the more difficult texts, or obscure parts of the Holy Scriptures; or any one, or more of these topics, at the discretion of the Preacher.

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HULSEAN LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 1.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

WHEN I last addressed you from this place, I endeavoured to prove the veracity of the Mosaic writings by the instances they contain of *coincidence without design* in their several parts; and I hope and believe that I succeeded in pointing out such coincidences as might come of truth, and could come of nothing but truth. These presented themselves in the history of the Patriarchs, even from Abraham to Joseph; and in the history of the chosen race in general, even from their departure out of Egypt to the

day when their great Lawgiver expired on the borders of that land of Promise into which Joshua was now to lead them—a long and eventful history. It is my intention at present to resume the subject; to pursue the adventures of this extraordinary people, as they are unfolded in some of the subsequent books of holy writ; and, still using the same test as before, to ascertain whether these portions of Scripture do not appear to be equally trust-worthy, and whilst, like the former, they assert, often without any recourse to the intervention of second causes, miracles many and mighty, they do not challenge confidence in those miracles by marks of reality, consistency, and accuracy, which the ordinary matters of fact combined with them constantly exhibit. ‘For this credibility of the common scripture history,’ says Bishop Butler, ‘gives

some credibility to its miraculous history; especially as this is interwoven with the common, so as that they imply each other, and both together make up one revelation*.' And surely a very striking circumstance it is, and what could scarcely happen in any continuous fable, however cunningly devised, that annals written by so many hands, embracing so many generations of men, relating to so many different states of society, abounding in supernatural incidents throughout, when brought to this same touchstone of truth, *undesignedness*, should not flinch from it; and surely the character of a history, like the character of an individual, when attested by vouchers not of one family, or of one place, or of one date only, but by such as speak to it under various relations, in different situations, and at

* Analogy, p. 389.

divers periods of time, can scarcely deceive us.

Perhaps too the turn which biblical criticism has of late taken may give to the peculiar argument here employed the merit of being the word in season; and whilst the articulation of scripture (so to speak), occupied with its component parts, may possibly occasion it to be less regarded than it should be in the mass, or as a whole, the effect of this argument is to establish the *general* truth of scripture, and with that to content itself; its *general* truth, I mean, considered with a reference to all practical purposes, which is our chief concern; and thus to pluck the sting out of those critical difficulties, however numerous and however minute, which in themselves have a tendency to excite our suspicion, and trouble our peace. Its effect, I say, is to establish

the *general* truth of scripture, because by this investigation I find occasional tokens of veracity, such as cannot, I think, mislead us, breaking out as the volume is unrolled, unconnected, unconcerted, unlooked for : tokens, which I hail as guarantees for more facts than they actually cover ; as spots which truth has singled out whereon to set her seal, in testimony that the whole document, of which they are a part, is her own act and deed ; as pass-words, with which the providence of God has taken care to furnish his ambassadors, which, though often trifling in themselves, and having no proportion (it may be) to the length or importance of the tidings they accompany, are still enough to prove the bearers to be in the confidence of their Almighty Sovereign, and to be qualified to execute the general commission with which they are charged, under his authority. Here I rest.

I. Moses then being dead, Joshua takes the command of the armies of Israel, and marches them over Jordan to the possession of the land of Canaan. It was a day and a deed much to be remembered. ‘It came to pass, when the people removed from their tents to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; and as they that bare the Ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the Ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks in the time of harvest,) that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the Ark of the

Covenant of the Lord stood firm on the dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan *.

Such is the language of the Book of Joshua. Now in the midst of this miraculous narrative, an incident is mentioned, though very casually, which dates the season of the year when this passage of the Jordan was effected. The feet of the priests, it seems, were dipped in the brim of the water; and this is explained by the season being that of the periodical inundation of Jordan, that river overflowing his banks all the time of harvest. The *barley*-harvest is here meant, or the former harvest, as it is elsewhere called, in contradistinction to the *wheat*, or latter harvest; for in the

* Joshua iii. 14—17.

fourth chapter (v. 19) we read, 'the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the *first month*,' that is, four days before the Passover, which fell in with the barley-harvest, the wheat-harvest not being fully completed till Pentecost, or fifty days later in the year, when the wave-loaves of the first-fruits of the wheat were offered up*. The Israelites passed the Jordan then, it appears, at the time of *barley*-harvest. But we are told in Exodus, that at the Plague of Hail, which was but a day or two before the Passover, 'the *flax* and the *barley* were smitten, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was bolled, but the wheat and the rye were not smitten, for they were not grown up†.' It should seem, therefore,

* Perhaps I may be permitted to refer to 'The Veracity of the Five Books of Moses,' p. 136, where this question of the harvests is examined in greater detail.

† Exod. ix. 31.

that the flax and the barley were crops which ripened about the same time in Egypt; and as the climate of Canaan did not differ materially from that of Egypt, this, no doubt, was the case in Canaan too; there also these two crops would come in at the same time. The Israelites, therefore, who crossed the Jordan, as we have seen in one passage, at the harvest, and that harvest, as we have seen in another passage, the *barley*-harvest, must, if so, have crossed it at the *flax*-harvest.

Now, in a former chapter, we are informed, that three days before Joshua ventured upon the invasion, he sent two men, spies, to view the land, even Jericho*. It was a service of peril: they were received by Rahab, a woman of that city, and lodged in her house: but the entrance of these

* Ch. i. 2; ii. 1, 22; iii. 2.

strangers at night-fall was observed : it was a moment, no doubt, of great suspicion and alarm : an enemy's army encamped on the borders. The thing was reported to the King of Jericho, and search was made for the men. Rahab, however, fearing God—for by faith she felt that the miracles wrought by him in favour of Israel, were proofs that for Israel he fought,—by faith, which, living as she did in the midst of idolaters, might well be counted to her for righteousness, and the like to which, in a somewhat similar case, was declared by our Lord, enough to lead those who professed it into the kingdom of God, even before the Chief-Priests and Elders themselves*—she, I say, having this faith in God, and true to those laws of hospitality which are the glory of the eastern nations, and more especially

* Hebr. xi. 31. Matth. xxi. 31.

of the females of the East, even to this day, at much present risk protected her guests from their pursuers. But how? ‘She brought them up to the roof of her house and hid them with the *stalks of flax* *’—the stalks of flax, no doubt just cut down, which she had spread upon the roof of her house to steep and to season.

Here I see truth. Yet how very minute is this incident! how very casually does it present itself to our notice! how very unimportant a matter it seems in the first instance, under what the spies were hidden! enough that, whatever it was, it answered the purpose, and saved their lives. Could the historian have contemplated for one moment the effect which a trifle about a flax-stalk might have in corroboration of his account of the passage of the Jordan? Is

* Ch. ii. 6.

it possible for the most jealous examiner of human testimony to imagine, that these flax-stalks were fixed upon above all things in the world for the covering of the spies, because they were known to be ripe with the barley, and the barley was known to be ripe at the Passover, and the Passover was known to be the season when the Israelites set foot in Canaan? Or rather, would he not fairly and candidly confess, that in one particular, at least, of this adventure, (the only one which we have an opportunity of checking,) a religious attention to truth is manifested; and that when it is said, the feet of the Priests were dipped in the brim of the water, and when a reason is assigned for this gradual approach to the bed of a river, of which the banks were in general steep and precipitous, we are put in possession of one unquestionable fact at least,

one particular upon which we may safely repose, whatever may be said of the remainder of the narrative, and that assuredly truth leads us by the hand to the very edge of the miracle, if not through the miracle itself?

II. The Israelites, having made this successful inroad into the land of Canaan, divided it amongst the Tribes. But the Canaanites, though panic-struck at their first approach, soon began to take heart, and the covetous policy of Israel (a policy which dictated attention to present pecuniary profits, no matter at what eventual cost to the great moral interests of the Commonwealth) had satisfied itself with making them tributaries, contrary to the command of God, that they should be driven out*; and, accordingly, they were suffered, as it

* Exod. xxiii. 31.

was promised, to become thorns in Israel's side, always vexing, often resisting, and sometimes oppressing them for many years together. Meanwhile the Tribe of Dan had its lot cast near the Amorites. It struggled to work out for itself a settlement; but its fierce and warlike neighbours drove in its outposts, and succeeded in confining it to the mountains*. The children of Dan became straitened in their borders, and, unable to extend them at home, 'they sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, to spy out the land and to search it.' So these five men departed, and directing their steps northwards, to the nearest parts of the country which held out any prospect to settlers, 'they came,' we are told, 'to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless after *the manner of*

* Judges i. 34.

the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and there was no magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in anything, and they were far from the *Zidonians*, and had no business with any man*.' Thus the circumstances of the place and the people were tempting to the views of the strangers. They return to their brethren, and advise an attempt upon the town. Accordingly they march against it, take it, and rebuilding the city, which was destroyed in the assault, change its name from Laish to Dan, and colonise it. From this it should appear that Laish, though far from Sidon, was in early times a town belonging to Sidon, and probably inhabited by Sidonians, for it was *after their manner* that the people lived.

Such is the information furnished us in the eighteenth chapter of the Book of Judges.

* Judges xviii. 7.

I now turn to the third chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, and I there find the following passage. ‘We took at that time,’ says Moses, ‘out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites, the land that was on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto Mount Hermon—*which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion*, and the Amorites call it Shenir*.’ But why this mention of the Sidonian name of this famous mountain? It was not near to Sidon—it does not appear to have belonged to Sidon; but to the king of Bashan†. The reason, though not obvious, is nevertheless discoverable, and a very curious geographical coincidence it affords between the former passage in Judges and this in Deuteronomy.

For Hermon, we know from St. Jerom, and from others, was just above Paneas, the seat

* Deut. iii. 9.

† Joshua xii. 4, 5.

of Jordan's flood*. And Paneas, we are told by the same authority, was another and more modern name (as Cæsarea Philippi was the most modern of all) for this very Dan or Laish. Now Laish, we have seen, was probably at first a settlement of the Sidonians, after whose manner the people of Laish lived. Accordingly it appears—but how distant and unconnected are the passages from which such a conclusion is drawn!—that although this Hermon was far from Sidon itself, still at its foot there was dwelling a Sidonian colony, a race speaking the Sidonian language; and, therefore, nothing could be more natural than that the mountain which

* ‘ Dan oppidum, quod nunc Paneas dicitur. Dan autem unus e fontibus Jordanis.’—Hieronym. in Quæstionibus in Genesin. It was also Cæsarea Philippi.—Euseb. Eccl. Hist., vii. c. xvii.

‘ The Hierusalem Targum, Numb. xxxv. writes thus, “ the mountain of snow at Cæsarea (Philippi)—this was Hermon.” ’
—Lightfoot, vol. ii. p. 62, fol.

overhung the town should have a Sidonian name, by which it was commonly known in those parts, and that this should suggest itself, as well as its Hebrew name, to Moses.

III. Connected with the circumstances of this same colony of Laish is another coincidence which I have to offer, and I introduce it in this place, because it is so connected, for otherwise it anticipates a point of Jewish history, which, in the order of the books of Scripture, lies a long way before me. The construction of Solomon's Temple, at Jerusalem, is the event at which it dates.

In the seventh chapter of the First Book of Kings, I read, 'and king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow's son of the Tribe of *Naphtali*, and his father was a man of *Tyre*, a worker in brass; and he was filled with wisdom and under-

standing, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work.' (v. 13.) But in the parallel passage in the second chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles (v. 13.), where we have the answer which king Hiram returned to Solomon, when the latter desired him to 'send him a man, cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass;' I find it running thus:—'Now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Hiram my father's, (or perhaps Hiram-Abi by name,) the son of a woman of the daughters of *Dan*, and his father was a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold.' It is evident, that the same individual is meant in both passages; yet there is an apparent discrepancy between them: the one in Kings asserting his mother to be a woman of the Tribe of *Naphtali*; the other, in Chronicles, asserting her to be

a woman of the daughters of *Dan*. The difficulty has driven the critics to some intricate expedients, in order to resolve it. 'She herself was of the Tribe of Dan,' says Dr. Patrick ; 'but her first husband was of the Tribe of Naphtali, by whom she had this son. When she was a widow, she married a man of Tyre, who is called Hiram's father, because he bred him up, and was the husband of his mother.' All this is gratuitous. The explanation only serves to show, that the interpreter was aware of the knot, but not of the solution. This difficulty, however, like many others in Scripture, when once explained, helps to confirm its truth. We have seen in the last paragraph, that six hundred Danites emigrated from their own Tribe, and seized upon Laish, a city of the Sidonians. Now the Sidonians were subjects of the king of

Tyre, and were the self-same people as the Tyrians; for in the fifth chapter of the First Book of Kings, where Solomon is reported as sending to the king of *Tyre* for workmen, he is said to assign as a reason for the application, ‘Thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the *Sidonians*.’ (v. 6.) The Tyrians, therefore, and the Sidonians were the same nation. But Laish or Dan, we found, was near the springs of Jordan; and therefore, since the ‘outgoings’ of the territory of Naphtali are expressly said to have been at Jordan, there is good reason to believe that Laish or Dan stood in the Tribe of Naphtali. But if so, then is the difficulty solved; for the woman was, by abode, of *Naphtali*; Laish, where she dwelt, being situated in that Tribe; and by birth, she was of *Dan*, being come of that little

colony of Danites, which the parent stock had sent forth in early times to settle at a distance. Meanwhile the very circumstance which interposes to reconcile the apparent disagreement, accounts no less naturally for the fact, that she had a Tyrian for her husband.

Now upon what a very trifle does this mark of truth turn! Who can suspect any thing insidious here? any trap for the unwary inquisitor after internal evidence in the domestic circumstances of a master-smith, employed by Solomon to build his temple?

I am glad to have it in my power to produce this geographical coincidence, because it is rare in its kind—the geography of Canaan, owing to its extreme perplexity, scarcely furnishing its due contingent to the argument I am handling. However, that

very intricacy may in itself be thought to say something to our present purpose ; arising, as it in a great degree does, out of the manifold instances in which different places are called by the same name in the Holy Land. Now whilst this accident creates a confusion, very unfavourable to determining their respective sites, and consequently stands in the way of such undesigned tokens of truth, as might spring out of a more accurate knowledge of such particulars; still it accords very singularly with the circumstances under which Scripture reports the land of Canaan to have been occupied :—I mean, that it was divided amongst Twelve Tribes of one and the same nation ; each, therefore, left to regulate the names within its own borders after its own pleasure ; and all having many associations in common, which would often over-rule

them, no doubt, however unintentionally, to fix upon the same. We have only to look to our own colonies, in whatever latitude dispersed, to see the like workings of the same natural feeling familiarly exemplified in the identity of local names, which they severally present. And it may be added, that such a geographical nomenclature was the more likely to establish itself in the new settlements of the Israelites, amongst whom, names of places, from the earliest times downwards, seem to have been seldom, if ever, arbitrary, but still to have carried with them some meaning, which was, or which was thought to be, significant.

IV. I have said that the Canaanites, who were spared by the Israelites after the first encounter with them, partly that they might derive from the conquered race a tribute, and partly that they might employ them in

the servile offices of hewing wood and drawing water, by degrees recovered their spirit, urged war successfully against their invaders, and for many years mightily oppressed Israel. The Philistines, the most formidable of the Canaanitish nations, and that under which the Israelites suffered the most severely, added policy to power. For at their bidding it came to pass, (and probably the precaution was adopted by others besides the Philistines,) that ‘there was no *smith* found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, lest the Hebrews make themselves swords and spears. But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock*.’ Such is said to have been the rigorous law of the conquerors. The

* 1 Sam. xiii. 19.

workers in iron were everywhere put down, lest, under pretence of making implements for the husbandman, they should forge arms for the rebel. Now that some such law was actually in force, (I am not aware that direct mention is made of it except in this one passage,) is a fact confirmed by a great many incidents, some of them very trifling and inconsiderable, none of them related or connected, but all of them turned by this one key.

Thus, when Ehud prepared to dispatch Eglon the king of Moab, to whom the Israelites were then subject, ‘he *made him*’ (we are told) ‘a dagger, which had two edges, of a cubit length, and he did gird it under his raiment upon his *right thigh**;’ he made it, it seems, himself, expressly for the occasion, and he bound it upon his *right*

* Judges iii. 16.

thigh, instead of his left, which was the sword-side, to baffle suspicion; whilst, being left-handed, he could wield it nevertheless. Moreover it may be observed in passing, that Ehud was a Benjamite*; and that of the Benjamites, when their fighting men turned out against Israel in the affair of Gibeah, there were seven hundred choice slingers *left-handed* †; and that of this discomfited army, six hundred persons escaped to the rock Rimmon, none so likely as the light-armed; and that this escape is dated by one of our most careful investigators of Scripture, Dr. Lightfoot, at thirteen years before Ehud's accession‡. What then is more probable,—yet I need not say how incidental is this touch of truth,—than that this left-handed Ehud, a Benjamite, was one who

* Judges iii. 16.

† Ibid. xx. 16.

‡ Lightfoot's Works, i. 44—47.

survived of those seven hundred left-handed slingers, who were Benjamites?

Thus again, Shamgar slays six hundred of the Philistines with an *ox-goad**; doubtless having recourse to an implement so inconvenient, because it was not permitted to carry arms or to have them in possession.

Thus Sampson, when he went down to Timnath, with no very friendly feeling towards the Philistines, however he might feign it, nor at a moment of great political tranquillity, was still unarmed; so that when ‘the young lion roared against him, he *rent* him, as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand.’† And when the same champion slew a thousand of the Philistines, it was with a jaw-bone, for he had no other choice. ‘Was there a

* Lightfoot's Works, iii. 31.

† Judges xiv. 5, 6.

spear or shield found in forty thousand of Israel * ?’

All these are indications, yet very oblique ones, that no smith or armourer wrought throughout all the land of Israel; for it will be perceived on examination, that every one of these incidents occurred at times when the Israelites were servants of Canaan.

Moreover, it was probably in consequence of this same restrictive law, that the *sling* became so popular a weapon amongst the Israelites. It does not appear that it was known, or at least used, under Moses. Whilst Israel was triumphant, it was not needed: in those happier days, her fighting-men were men that ‘drew the sword.’ In the days of her oppression, they were driven to the use of more ignoble arms. The sling was readily constructed, and readily

* Judges v. 18.]

concealed. Whilst a staff or hempen-stalk grew in her fields, and a smooth stone lay in her brooks, this artillery at least was ever forthcoming. It was not a very fatal weapon, unless wielded with consummate skill. The Philistines despised it: Goliath, we may remember, scorns it as a weapon against a dog: but by continual application to the exercise of it, (for it was now their only hope,) the Israelites converted a rude and rustic plaything into a formidable engine of war. That troop of Benjamites, of whom I have already spoken, had taken pains to make themselves equally expert with either hand—(every one could sling stones at an hair-breadth, and not miss)—and the precision with which David directed it, would not perhaps be thought extraordinary amongst the active and practised youths of his day.

These particulars, it will be perceived, are many and divers; and though they might not of themselves have enabled us to draw them into an induction that the Canaanites withheld from Israel the use of arms; yet, when we are put in possession of the single fact, that no smith was allowed throughout all Israel, we are at once supplied with the centre, towards which they are one and all perceived to converge.

I know not how incidents of the kind here produced, (many more of which I hope to offer on future occasions,) can be accounted for, except by the supposition that they are portions of a true and actual history; and they who may feel that there is in them some force, but who may at the same time feel that fuller evidence is wanted to compel their assent to a Scripture which makes upon them demands so large; who

secretly whisper to themselves, in the temper of the incredulous Jew of old, ‘ we would a sign ;’ or of him who mocked, saying, ‘ Let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe ’—let such calmly and dispassionately consider, that there could be no room for faith, if there were no room for doubt ; that the scheme of our probation requires, perhaps as a matter of necessity, that faith should be in it a very chief ingredient ; that the exercise of faith, (as we may partly perceive,) both the spirit which must foster it, and the spirit which must issue from it, is precisely what seems fit for moulding us into vessels for future honour ; that natural religion lifts up its voice to tell us, that in this world we are undoubtedly living under the dispensation of a God, who has given us probability, and not demonstration, for the principle of our or-

dinary guidance ; and that he may be therefore well disposed to proceed under a similar dispensation, with regard to the next world, trying thereby who is the ‘ wise servant’—who is reasonable in his demands for evidence, for such he rejects not ; and who is presumptuous, for such he still further hardens,—saying to the one with complacency and satisfaction, ‘ because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou ? Thou shalt see greater things than these *.’ And to the other, in sorrow and rebuke, ‘ because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed ; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed †.’

* John i. 50.

† Ibid. xx. 29.

LECTURE II.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 1.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

It is most satisfactory to find, as the history of the Israelites unfolds itself, the same indications of truth and accuracy still continuing to present themselves—the same signatures (as it were) of a subscribing witness of credit, impressed on every sheet as we turn it over in its order. The glory of Israel is now brought before us: David comes upon the scene, destined to fill the most conspicuous place in the annals of his country, and furnishing, in the details of his long and eventful life, a series of arguments such as we are in search of, decisive, I think, of the reality of his story, and of the

fidelity with which it is told. With these I shall be now for some time engaged.

I. The circumstances under which he first appears before us, are such as give token at once of his intrepid character and trust in God. ‘And there went’ out a champion,’ (so we read in the seventeenth chapter of the First Book of Samuel,) ‘out of the camp of the Philistines, Goliath of *Gath*, whose height was six cubits and a span.’ The point upon which the argument for the veracity of the history which ensues will turn, is the incidental mention here made of *Gath*, as the city of Goliath, a patronymic which might have been thought of very little importance, either in its insertion or omission; here, however, it stands. Goliath of *Gath* was David’s gigantic antagonist. Now let us mark the value of this casual designation of the formidable Philis-

tine. The report of the spies whom Moses sent into Canaan, as given in the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers, was as follows :—‘ The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it, were men of a *great stature*. And there we saw the *giants*, the sons of *Anak*, which came of the giants. And we were, in our own sight, as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight*. Moses is here a testimony unto us, that these Anakims were a race of extraordinary stature. This fact let us bear in mind, and now turn to the Book of Joshua. There it is recorded amongst the feats of arms of that valiant leader of Israel, whereby he achieved the conquest of Canaan, that ‘ He cut off the *Anakims* from the mountains,

* Numb. xiii. 32, 3.

from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly, with their cities. There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel, only' (observe the exception) 'in Gaza, in *Gath*, and in Ashdod, there remained *.' Here, in his turn, comes in Joshua as a witness, that when he put the Anakims to the sword, he left some remaining in three cities, and in no others; and one of these three cities was *Gath*. Accordingly, when in the Book of Samuel we find *Gath* most incidentally named as the country of Goliath, the fact squares very singularly with those two other independent facts, brought together from two independent authorities—the Books of Moses and Joshua—the one, that the Anakims

* Josh. xi. 21, 22.

were persons of gigantic size ; the other, that some of this nearly exterminated race, who survived the sword of Joshua, did actually continue to dwell at *Gath*. Thus in the mouth of three witnesses—Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, is the word established : concurring as they do, in a manner the most artless and satisfactory, to confirm one particular at least in this singular exploit of David. One particular, and that a hinge upon which the whole moves, is discovered to be matter of fact beyond all question ; and therefore, in the absence of all evidence whatever to the contrary, I am disposed to believe the other particulars of the same history to be matter of fact too. Yet are there many, I will not say miraculous, but certainly most providential circumstances involved in it ; circumstances arguing, and meant to argue,

the invisible hand by which David fought, and Goliath fell. The stripling from the sheepfold withstanding the man of war from his youth—the ruddy boy, his carriage, and his cheeses left for the moment, hearing and rejoicing both to hear and accept the challenge, which struck terror into the veterans of Israel—the shepherd's bag, with five smooth stones, and no more, (such assurance did he feel of speedy success,) opposed to the helmet of brass, and the coat of brazen mail, and the greaves of brass, and the gorget of brass, and the shield borne before him, and the spear with the staff like a weaver's beam—the first sling of a pebble, the signal of panic and overthrow to the whole host of the Philistines—all this claims the character of more than an ordinary event, and asserts, (as David declared it to do,) that The

Lord saveth not with sword and spear, but that the battle is the Lord's, and that he gave it into Israel's hands *.'

II. I proceed with the exploits of David: for though the coincidences themselves are distinct, they make up a story which is almost continuous. David, we are told, had now won the hearts of all Israel. The daughters of the land sung his praises in the dance, and their words awoke the jealousy of Saul. 'Saul had slain his thousands—David his ten thousands.' Accordingly the king, forgetful of his obligations to the gallant deliverer of his country from the yoke of the Philistines, and regardless of the claims of the husband of his daughter, sought his life. Twice he attacked him with a javelin as he played before him in his chamber: he laid an

* 1 Sam. xvii. 47.

ambuscade about his house: he pursued him with bands of armed men as he fled for his life amongst the mountains. David, however, had less fear for himself than for his kindred,—for himself he could provide—his conscience was clear, his courage good, the hearts of his countrymen were with him, and God was on his side. But his name might bring evil on his house, and the safety of his *parents* was his first care. How then did he secure it? ‘And David,’ we read, ‘went thence to Mizpeh of *Moab*, and he said unto the king of *Moab*, let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you till I know what God will do for me. And he brought them before the king of *Moab*; and they dwelt with him all the time that David continued in the hold*.’

* 1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4.

Now why should David be disposed to trust his father and mother to the protection of the Moabites above all others? Saul, it is true, had been at war with them*, whatever he might then be,—but so had he been with every people round about; with the Ammonites, with the Edomites, with the kings of Zobah. Neither did it follow, that the enemies of Saul, as a matter of course, would be the friends of David. On the contrary, he was only regarded by the ancient inhabitants of the land, to whichever of the seven nations they belonged, as the champion of Israel; and with such suspicion was he received amongst them, notwithstanding Saul's known enmity towards him, that before Achish king of Gath, he was constrained to feign himself mad, and so effect his escape. And though he after-

* 1 Sam. xiv. 47.

wards succeeded in removing the scruples of that prince, and obtained his confidence, and dwelt in his land, yet the princes of the Philistines, in general, continued to put no trust in him; and when it was proposed by Achish, that he, with his men, should go up with the armies of the Philistines against Israel,—and when he had actually joined,—‘the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go to the place which thou hast appointed him; and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master—should it not be with the heads of these men*?’

Whether, indeed, the Moabites proved themselves to be less suspicious of David than these, his other idolatrous neighbours,

* 1 Sam. xxix. 4.

does not appear; nor whether their subsequent conduct warranted the trust which he was now compelled to repose in them. Tradition says, that they betrayed it, and slew his parents; and certain it is, that David, some twenty years afterwards, proceeded against them with signal severity; for ‘he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive*’. Something, therefore, had occurred in the interval to excite his heavy displeasure against them: and if the punishment seems to have tarried too long to be consistent with so remote a cause of offence, it must be remembered that, for fourteen of those years, the throne of David was not established amongst the Ten

* 2 Sam. viii. 2.

Tribes; and that, amidst the domestic disorders of a new reign, leisure and opportunity for taking earlier vengeance upon this neighbouring kingdom might well be wanting. But however this might be, in Moab David sought sanctuary for his father and mother; perilous this decision might be,—probably it turned out so in fact,—but he was in a great strait, and thought that, in a choice of evils, this was the least.

Now what principle of preference may be imagined to have governed David when he committed his family to the dangerous keeping of the Moabites? Was it a mere matter of chance? It might seem so, as far as appears to the contrary in David's history, given in the Books of Samuel; and if the Book of Ruth had never come down to us, to accident it probably would have been ascribed. But this short and beautiful

historical document shows us a *propriety* in the selection of Moab above any other, for a place of refuge to the father and mother of David ; since it is there seen, that the grandmother of Jesse, David's father, was actually a *Moabitess* ; Ruth being the mother of Obed, and Obed the father of Jesse*. And, moreover, that Orpah, the other Moabitess, who married Mahlon at the time when Ruth married Chilion his brother, remained behind in Moab after the departure of Naomi and Ruth, and remained behind with a strong feeling of affection, nevertheless, for the family and kindred of her deceased husband, taking leave of them with tears†. She herself then, or, at all events, her descendants and friends, might still be alive. Some regard for the posterity of Ruth, David would persuade

* Ruth iv. 17.

† Ibid. i. 14.

himself, might still survive amongst them. An interval of fifty years, for it probably was not more, was not likely, he might think, to have worn out the memory and the feelings of relationship, in a country and at a period, which acknowledged the ties of family to be long and strong, and the blood to be the life thereof.

Thus do we detect, not without some pains, a certain fitness in the conduct of David in this transaction, which marks it to be a real one. The forger of a story could not have fallen upon the happy device of sheltering Jesse in Moab, simply on the recollection of his Moabitish extraction two generations earlier; or, having fallen upon it, it is probable he would have taken care to draw the attention of his readers towards his device by some means or other, lest the evidence it was intended to afford of the

truth of the history might be thrown away upon him. As it is, the circumstance itself is asserted without the smallest attempt to explain or account for it. Nay, recourse must be had to another book of Scripture, in order that the coincidence may be seen.

III. Events roll on, and another incident in the life of David now offers itself, which also argues the truth of what we read concerning him. ‘And Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved David,’ we are told*. On becoming his wife, she gave further proof of her affection for him, by risking the vengeance of Saul her father, when she let David through the window that he might escape, and made an image and put it in the bed, to deceive Saul’s messengers†. After this, untoward circumstances produced a temporary separation of David and

* 1 Sam. xviii. 20.

† Ibid. xix. 12.

Michal. She remains in her father's custody,—and Saul, who was the tyrant of his family, as well as of his people, gives her 'unto Phaltiel, the son of Laish,' to wife. Meanwhile David, in his turn, takes Abigail the widow of Nabal, and Ahinoam of Jezreel, to be his wives; and continues the fugitive life he had been so long constrained to adopt for his safety. Years pass away, and with them a multitude of transactions foreign to the subject I have now before me. Saul however is slain; but a formidable faction of his friends, and the friends of his house, still survives. Abner, the late monarch's captain, and Ish-bosheth*, his son

* There is something remarkable, and to our present purpose, perhaps, in Abner choosing Ish-bosheth for the champion of Saul's party, and passing over Meph-ibosheth, the son of Jonathan, who was the natural head of the house of Saul. It might be, indeed, because the latter was a child, (2 Sam. iv. 4.) though his name might have served the purpose of Abner as well as that of Ish-bosheth, who

and successor in the kingdom of Israel, put themselves at its head. But David waxing stronger every day, and a feud having sprung up between the prince and this his officer, overtures of submission are made and accepted, of which the following is the sub-

appears to have had no peculiar fitness for the part he had to play. But may not the true cause of the preference be this—that Jonathan was born *before Saul was king*, (1 Sam. xiii. 21,) but Ish-bosheth *after*? For Saul, we read, reigned forty years, (Acts xiii. 21,) and Ish-bosheth, we read again, but in a passage far indeed removed from the other, was forty years old at Saul's death, (2 Sam. ii. 10,) and therefore must have been born in the first year of his father's reign; being thus at *his birth* a king's son—one of the *πορφυρογεννηται*, as they were called in the Greek empire—a class to whom, in several eastern kingdoms, precedence was given over the mere eldest born; the *legal* title to the throne of Solomon himself was, apparently, no other than this. Yet the coincidence between the accidental advantage of Ish-bosheth's birth over that of Meph-ibosheth, and Abner's preference of him as a rival to set up against David, is as far from obvious, as anything that can be imagined. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to detect it, were it not for an incidental passage in a speech of St. Paul, given in the Acts of the Apostles.—*See Dr. Townson's Works*, i. p. 58.

stance :—‘ And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, whose is the land? Saying, also, make thy league with me, and behold my hand shall be with thee to bring about all Israel unto thee. And he said, well, I will make a league with thee; but one thing I require of thee—that is, thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul’s daughter, when thou comest to see my face. And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, saying, deliver me my wife Michal, whom I espoused to me. And Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish. And her husband went with her along, *weeping behind her, to Bahurim*. Then said Abner unto him, go, return; and he returned*.’ It is probable, therefore, that Michal and Phaltiel parted

* 2 Sam. iii. 12.

very reluctantly. She had evidently gained his affections; he, most likely, had won her's: and in the mean time, she had been supplanted, (so at least she might think,) in David's house and heart, by Abigail and Ahinoam. These were not propitious circumstances, under which to return to the husband of her youth. The effect, indeed, they were likely to have upon her conduct, is not even hinted at in the remotest degree in the narrative; but they supply us, however, incidentally with the link that couples Michal in her first character, with Michal in her second and later character; for the difference between them is marked, though it might escape us on a superficial glance; and if our attention did not happen to be arrested by the events of the interval, it would almost infallibly escape us. The last act then, in which we left Michal en-

gaged, was one of loyal attachment to David—saving his life, probably at great risk of her own; for Saul had actually attempted to put Jonathan his son to death for David's sake, and why should he spare Michal his daughter?*

Her subsequent marriage with Phaltiel was Saul's business; it might, or might not, be with her consent: an act of conjugal devotion to David was the last scene in which she was, to our knowledge, a voluntary actor. Now let us mark the next,—not the next event recorded in order, for we lose sight of Michal for a season,—but the next in which she is a party concerned; at the same time remembering that the Books of Samuel do not offer the slightest explanation of the contrast which her former and latter self present, or the least allusion to the change. David brings

* 1 Sam. xx. 33.

the Ark from Kirjath-jearim, where it had been abiding since it was recovered from the Philistines, to his own city. He dances before it, girded with the priestly or prophetic vest, the linen ephod, and probably chanting his own noble hymn, ‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in *!’ Michal, in that hour, no doubt felt and reflected the joy of her husband! She had shared with him the day of adversity—she was now called to be partaker of his triumph! How read we? The reverse of all this. ‘Then did Michal, Saul’s daughter, look through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord, and *she despised him in her heart* †.’ Nor did she confine herself to contemptuous silence: for when he had now

* Psalm xxiv. 7.

† 2 Sam. vi. 16.

set up the Ark in the midst of the tabernacle, and had blessed the people, he came unto his own household prepared, in the joy and devotion of the moment, to bless that also. How then is he received by the wife whom he had twice won at the hazard of his own life, and who had in return shown herself heretofore ready to sacrifice her own safety for his preservation? Thus it was. ‘ Michal came out to meet him, and said, how glorious is the king of Israel to day in the eyes of the *handmaids* of his servants!—as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself.’ Here was a burst of ill temper, which rather made an occasion for showing itself, than sought one. Accordingly, David replies with spirit, and with a righteous zeal for the honour of God,—not without an allusion (as I think) to the secret, but true cause of this sple-

netic attack,—‘ It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than this, and will be base in mine own sight; and of the *maid-servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be held in honour**.’ In these *handmaids* or *maid-servants*, which are so prominently set forth, I recognise, if I mistake not, Abigail and Ahinoam, the rivals of Michal; and the very pointed rebuke which the insinuation provokes from David, appears to me to indicate, that (whatever she might affect) he felt that the gravamen of her pretended concern for his debasement did, in truth, rest here. And may I not add, that the winding up of this

* 2 Sam. vi. 21, 22.

singular incident, ‘ therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death,’ well accords with my suspicions ; and that whether it be hereby meant that God judged her, or that David divorced her, there is still something in the nature of her punishment *appropriate* to the nature of her transgression ?

On the whole, Michal is now no longer what Michal was—but she is precisely what, from the new position in which she stands, we might expect her to be. Yet it is by the merest glimpses of the history of David and her own, that we are enabled to account for the change. The fact is not formally explained ; it is not even formally asserted. All that appears, is a marked inconsistency in the conduct of Michal, at two different points of time ; and when we look about for an explanation, we perceive in the

corresponding fortunes of David, as compared with her own during the interval, a very natural, though after all only a conjectural, explanation.

Herein, I again repeat, are the characters of truth,—incidents dropping into their places without care or contrivance,—the fragments of an imperfect figure recovered out of a mass of material, and found to be still its component parts, however they might not seem such when *individually* examined.

And here let me remark, (for I have been unwilling to interrupt my argument for the purpose of collateral explanation, and yet without it I may be thought to have purchased the evidence at some expense of the moral,) that the practice of polygamy, which was not from the beginning, but which Lamech first adopted, probably in the hope

of multiplying his issue, and so possessing himself of that ‘seed,’ which was now the ‘*desire* of the nations *’— a desire which serves as a key (the only satisfactory one, I think) to much of the conduct of the Patriarchs,—the practice of polygamy, I say, thus introduced, continued, in David’s time, not positively condemned; Moses having been only commissioned to regulate some of the abuses to which it led; and though his writing of divorcement must be considered as making allowance for the hardness of heart of those for whom he was legislating, (our Lord himself so considers it,)— a hardness of heart confirmed by a long and slavish residence in a most polluted land; still that writing, lax as it might be, was, no doubt, in itself a *restrictive* law, as matters then stood. The provisions of the

* Matt. xix. 8.

Levitical code in general, and the extremely gross state of society they argue, prove that it must have been a *restrictive* law, an *improvement* upon past practices at least. And when the times of the Gospel approached, and a better dispensation began to dawn, the Almighty prepared the world, by the mouth of a Prophet, to expect those restrictions to be drawn closer,—Malachi being commanded to proclaim, what had not been proclaimed before, that God ‘hated putting away *.’ And when at length mankind were ripe for a more wholesome decree, Christ himself pronounced it, and thenceforward, ‘A man was to cleave unto his wife,’ and ‘they *twain* were to be one flesh,’ and by none were they ‘to be put asunder, God having joined them together †.’ A *progressive* scheme this—agree-

* Malachi ii. 16.

† Mark x. 7. 2 Cor. xi. 2.

able to that general plan by which the Almighty seems to be almost always guided in his government—the development of that same principle by which the law against murder was passed for an age that was full of violence ; and was afterwards sublimed into a law against malice : by which the law against adultery was provided for a carnal and grovelling generation ; and was afterwards refined into a law against concupiscence : by which the law of strict retaliation, and no more, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth—a law, low and ungenerous as it may now be thought, nevertheless in advance of the people for whom it was enacted, and better than the law of the strongest—afterwards gave place to that other and nobler law, ‘ resist not evil.’ And it may be observed, that the very case of divorce, (and polygamy is closely con-

nected with it) is actually in the contemplation of our Lord, when he is thus exhibiting to the Jews the more elevated standard of Christian morals, and is ever contrasting, as he proceeds,—‘ It was said by them of old time,’ with his own more excellent way, ‘ but I say unto you ;’ as if in times past, according to the words of the Apostle, ‘ God suffered nations to walk in their own ways *’ for some wise purpose, and for awhile ‘ winked at that ignorance †.’

IV. But there is another circumstance connected with this removal of the Ark of God to Jerusalem, which bespeaks, like the last, the fidelity with which the tale is told. It was the intention of David to have conveyed this emblem of God’s presence with his people from Kirjath-jearim (from

* Acts xiv. 16.

† Ibid. xvii. 30.

Ephratah, where they found it in the wood*) at once to his own city. An incident, however, of which I shall presently speak, occurred to shake his purpose and change his plan. ‘So David,’ we read upon this, ‘would not remove the Ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom, the *Gittite*†.’ Now what regulated David in choosing the house of Obed-Edom as a resting-place for the Ark? Was it an affair of mere chance? It might be so; no motive whatever, for the selection of *his* house above that of another man, is assigned—but this we are taught, that ‘when the cart which bare the Ark came to Nabor’s threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his hand and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it—and the anger of the Lord was kindled

* Ps. cxxxii. 6.

† 2 Sam. vi. 10.

against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error, and he died by the Ark of God*.' It had been commanded, as we find in the seventh chapter of the Book of Numbers (v. 9), that the Ark should be borne on the shoulders of the Levites—David, however, had placed it in a cart after the fashion of the Philistines' idols, and had neglected the Levitical precept. The sudden death of Uzzah, and the nature of his offence alarms him, sets him to think, reminds him of his neglect, and he turns to the house of Obed-Edom, the *Gittite*. The epithet here so incidentally annexed to the name of Obed-Edom, enables us to answer the question, wherefore David chose the house of this man, with some probability of being right in our conjecture. For we learn from the Book of Joshua, that *Gath* (dis-

* 2 Sam. vi. 6.

tinguished from other towns of the same name, by the addition of Rimmon*) was one of the cities of the *Levites*; nor of the Levites only, but of the *Kohathites* (v. 20), the very family specially set apart from the Levites, that ‘they should bear the Ark upon their shoulders †.’ If, therefore, Obed-Edom was called the Gittite, from *this* Gath, as he doubtless was so called from some Gath or other, then must he have been a *Levite*; and more than this, actually a *Kohathite*; so that he would be strictly in his office when keeping the Ark; and because he was so, he was selected; David causing the Ark to be ‘carried aside,’ or out of the direct road (for that is the force of the expression ‡), precisely for the purpose of depositing it with

* Joshua xxi. 24.

† Numb. vii. 9.

‡ See Numb. xx. 17. where the same Hebrew word is used, and xxii. 23.

a man of an order, and of a peculiar division of that order, which God had chosen for his Ark-bearers. Accordingly, we read in the fifteenth chapter of the first book of Chronicles (v. 38), where a fuller account, in some particulars, is given, than in the parallel passage of Samuel, of the final removal of the Ark, from under the roof of Obed-Edom to Jerusalem, that Obed-Edom was actually on this occasion one of the ‘Porters;’ for the profane cart was no longer employed, but the more reverential mode of conveyance, and that which the law enjoined, was now strictly adopted in its stead.

This I look upon as a coincidence of some value—(supposing it, of course, to be fairly made out)—of some value, I mean, even independently of its general bearing upon the credibility of Scripture ; for it is a touch of truth in the circumstantial details of an

event which is in its nature miraculous. This it establishes as a fact, that, for some reason or other, David went out of his way to deposit the Ark with an individual of a family whose particular province it was to serve and bear the Ark. This, I say, is established by the coincidence as a fact—and here, taking my stand with substantial ground under my feet, I can with safety, and without violence, gradually feel my way along through the inconvenience which prompted this deviation from the direct path; this change in the mode of conveyance; this sudden reverence for the laws of the Ark; even up to the disaster which befel the rash and unconsecrated Uzzah, and the caution and alarm it inspired, as being a manifest interposition of God for the vindication of his honour; and when I find the apparently trivial appellation of the *Gittite*,

thus pleading for the reality of a marvellous act of the Almighty, I am reminded how carefully we should gather up every word of Scripture that nothing be lost; and I am led to contemplate the precautions, the superstitious precautions of the Rabbins, if you will, that one jot, or one tittle may not be suffered to pass from the text of the law, not without respect, as if its every letter might contain some hidden treasure, some unsuspected fount, from which virtue might haply go out for evidence, for doctrine, or for duty.

LECTURE III.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 1.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

WE are now arrived at another incident in the history of David—for I must still call your attention to the memoirs of that extraordinary person, as exhibiting marks of truth and reality, numerous perhaps beyond those which any other character of the same antiquity presents—an incident which has been accounted, and most justly accounted, the reproach of his life. The province which I have marked out for myself in these sermons, is the evidence for the veracity of the sacred historians, and not the interpretation of the moral difficulties which the history itself may sometimes involve : those difficulties I should be in general more dis-

posed to neutralise, than to deny or to explain ; and by appealing to the argument of natural religion, where the case admits of it (which it most commonly does), repose upon this conclusion, that if they be thought enough to make us infidels, they ought also to be thought enough, upon every principle of sound reasoning, to make us atheists too. In the present instance, however, the very coincidence which establishes the trustworthiness of the history, may serve also to remove some stumbling-blocks out of the sceptic's path, and vindicate the ways of God to man.

I. That the man after God's own heart should have so fallen from his high estate, as to become the adulterer and the assassin, has been ever urged with great effect by unbelievers; and this very consequence of David's sin was foreseen and foretold by

Nathan the prophet, when he approached the king, bearing with him the rebuke of God on his tongue, and saying, ‘by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme.’ Such has indeed been its effect from the day when it was first done, even unto this day, and such probably will its effect continue to be unto the end of time. David’s transgression, committed almost three thousand years ago, sheds, in some sort, an evil influence on the cause of David’s God even now. So wide-wasting is the mischief which flows from the lapse of a righteous man ; so great the darkness becomes, when the light that is amongst us is darkness. But was David the man after God’s own heart here? It were blasphemy to suppose it. That the sin of David was fulfilling some righteous judgment of God against Uriah and his house, I doubt not—

for God often makes his enemies his instruments, and without sanctifying the means, strikes out of them good. Still a sin it was, great and grievous, offensive to that God to whom the blood of Uriah cried from the ground. And this the Almighty proclaimed even more loudly perhaps by suffering David to live, than if, in the sudden burst of his instant displeasure, he had slain him. For, at the period when the King of Israel fell under this sad temptation, he was at the very height of his glory and his strength. The kingdom of Israel had never so flourished before ; it was the first of the nations. He had thoroughly subdued the Philistines, that mighty people, who in his youth had compelled all the Israelites to come down to their quarters, even to sharpen their mattocks, so rigid was the exercise of their rule. He had smitten the Moabites, on the

other side Jordan, once themselves the oppressors of Israel, making them tributaries. He had subdued the Edomites, a race that delighted in war, and had stationed his troops throughout all their territories. He had possessed himself of the independent kingdom of the Syrians, and garrisoned Damascus, their capital. He had extended his frontier eastward to the Euphrates*, though never perhaps beyond it, and he was on the point of reducing the Ammonites, whose city, Rabbah, his generals were besieging; and thus, the whole of the promised land, with the exception of the small state of Tyre, which the Israelites never appear to have conquered, was now his own. Prosperity, perhaps, had blinded his eyes, and hardened his heart. The treasures which he had amassed, and the ease which he had

* 2 Sam. viii.

fought for and won, had made him luxurious ; for now it was, that the once innocent son of Jesse the Bethlehemite,—he who had been taken from the sheep-folds because an excellent spirit was in him, and who had hitherto prospered in all that he had set his hand unto,—it was now that this man was tempted and fell. And now mark the remainder of his days—God eventually forgave him, for he repented him (as his penitential psalms still most affectingly attest), in the bitterness and anguish of his soul ; but God dried up all the sources of his earthly blessings thenceforwards for ever. With this sin the sorrow of his life began, and the *curse* which the prophet denounced against him, sat heavy on his spirit to the last ; a curse, and I beg attention to this, which has a peculiar reference to the nature of his crime ; as though upon this offence

all his future miseries and misfortunes were to turn ; as though he was only spared from the avenger's violent hand to be made a spectacle of righteous suffering to the world. He had committed murder by the edge of the sword, and therefore the sword was never to depart from his house. He had despised the commandment of the Lord (so Nathan expressly says), and taken the wife of another to be his wife ; therefore were his own wives to be taken from him and given to his neighbour in turn. The *complexion*, therefore, of his remaining years, was set by this one fatal deed of darkness, (let none think or say that it was lightly regarded by the Almighty,) and having become the man of blood, of blood he was to drink deep, and having become the man of lust, by that same baneful passion in others, was he himself to be scourged for ever. Now the manner in

which these tremendous threats are fulfilled is very remarkable ; for it is done by way of *natural consequence* of the sin itself ; a dispensation which I have not seen developed as it deserves to be, though the facts of the history furnish very striking materials for the purpose. And herein lies the coincidence, to which the remarks I have hitherto been making are a needful prologue.

By the *rebellion of Absalom* it was that these menaces of the Almighty Judge of all the earth were accomplished with a fearful fidelity.

Absalom was able to draw after him the hearts of all the people as one man. And what was it that armed him with this moral strength ? What was it that gave him the means of unseating his father in the affections of a loyal people ?—The king whom they had so greatly loved—who had raised

the name of Israel to a pitch of glory never attained unto before—whose praises had been sung by the mothers and maidens of Israel, as the champion to whom none other was like? How could he steal away the hearts of the people from such a man, with so little effort, and apparently with so little reason? I believe that this very sin of David was made the engine by which his throne was shaken; for I observe that the chief instrument in the conspiracy was *Ahithophel*. No sooner has Absalom determined upon his daring deed, than he looks to Ahithophel for help. He appears, for some reason or other not mentioned, to have quite reckoned upon him as well-affected to his cause, as ready to join him in it heart and hand; and he did not find himself mistaken. ‘Absalom,’ I read *, ‘sent for Ahithophel

* 2 Sam. xv. 12.

the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices—and the conspiracy,' (it is forthwith added, as though Ahithophel was a host in himself) 'was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.' David, upon this, takes alarm, and makes it the subject of his earnest prayer to God, that 'he would turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.' Nor is this to be wondered at, when we are told in another place that 'the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David and with Absalom†.' He therefore was the sinews of Absalom's cause. Of his character, and the influence which he possessed over the people, Absalom availed himself, both to

* 2 Sam. xvi. 23.

sink the spirits of David's party, and to inspire his own with confidence, for all men counted Ahithophel to be as a prophet. But independently of the weight of his public reputation, it is probable that certain private wrongs of his own, (of which I have now to speak,) at once prepared him for accepting Absalom's rebellious overtures with alacrity, and caused him to find still greater favour in the eyes of the people, as being an injured man, whom it was fit that they should avenge of his adversary. For in the twenty-third chapter of the second Book of Samuel, I find in the catalogue of David's guardsmen, thirty-seven in number, the name of 'Eliam, the son of *Ahithophel the Gilonite*,' (v. 34). The epithet of Gilonite sufficiently identifies this Ahithophel with the conspirator of the same name. One, therefore, of the thirty-seven officers about

David's person, was a son of the future conspirator against his throne. But, in this same catalogue, I also meet with the name of *Uriah the Hittite* (v. 39). Eliam, therefore, and Uriah must have been thrown much together, being both of the same rank, and being each one of the thirty-seven officers of the king's guard. Now, from the eleventh chapter of the second Book of Samuel, I learn that Uriah the Hittite had for his wife Bath-sheba, the daughter of one *Eliam* (v. 3). I look upon it, therefore, to be so probable, as almost to amount to certainty, that this was the same Eliam as before, and that Uriah (as was very natural, considering the necessary intercourse of the parties) had married the daughter of his brother officer, and accordingly, the *grand-daughter of Ahithophel*. I feel that I now have the key to the conduct of this leading

conspirator ; the sage and prudent friend of David converted, by some means or other, into his deadly foe—for I now perceive, that when David murdered Uriah, he murdered Ahithophel's *grandson* by marriage, and when he corrupted Bath-sheba, he corrupted his *grand-daughter* by blood. Well then, after this disaster and dishonour of his house, might revenge rankle in the heart of Ahithophel ! Well might Absalom know that nothing but a fit opportunity was wanted by him, that he might give it vent, and spend his treasured wrath upon the head of David his wrong-doer ! Well might he approach him with confidence, and impart to him his treason, as a man who would welcome the news, and be his present and powerful fellow-worker ! Well might the people, who, upon an appeal like this, seldom fail to follow the dictates of their better feelings, and

to stand manfully by the injured, find their allegiance to a throne defiled with adultery and blood, relaxed, and their loyalty transferred to the rebel's side! And the terms in which Shimei reproaches the king, when he follows after him to Bahurim, *casting stones* at him, not improbably as expressive of the legal punishment of the adulterer, 'Come out, come out, thou *bloody* man, thou man of *Belial**;' and the meekness moreover with which David bows to the reproach, accepting it as a merited chastisement from God, 'So let him curse, because the *Lord hath said unto him*, curse David' (v. 20); are minute incidents which testify to the same fact—to the popular voice now lifted up against David, and to the merited cause thereof. Well might he find his heart sink within him, when he heard that his ancient

* 2 Sam. xvi. 7.

counsellor had joined the ranks of his enemies, and when he knew but too well what reason he had given him for turning his arms against himself in that unmitigated and inextinguishable thirst for vengeance which is sweet, however utterly unjustifiable, to all men so deeply injured, and sweetest of all to the children of the East! And in the very first word of exhortation which Ahithophel suggests to Absalom, I detect, or think I detect, the wounded spirit of the man seizing the earliest moment for inflicting a punishment upon his enemy, of a kind that should not only be bitter, but appropriate, the eye for the eye; and when Absalom said, ‘Give counsel among you what we shall do,’ and Ahithophel answered, ‘Go in unto thy father’s concubines which he hath left to keep the house*,’ he was not only moved

* 2 Sam. xvi. 21.

by the desire that the rebellious son should stand fairly committed to his rebellion by an unpardonable outrage against the majesty of an eastern monarch, but by the desire also to make David taste the bitterness of that cup which he had caused others to drink, and to receive the very measure which he had himself meted withal. And so it came to pass, that Absalom followed his counsel, and they spread for him the incestuous tent, we read, on the top of the house, in the sight of all Israel*, on that very roof, it should seem, on which David at even-tide had walked, when he conceived this his great sin, upon which his life was to turn as upon a hinge†; and so again it came to pass, and under circumstances of local identity and exposure which wear the aspect of strictly judicial reprisals, that that

* 2 Sam. xvi. 22.

† 2 Sam. xi. 2.

which he had done secretly (his abduction of another man's wife) God did for him, and more also, as he said he would, before all Israel, and before the sun*.

Thus, having once discovered by the apposition of many passages, that a relation subsisted between Ahithophel and Uriah, a fact which the sacred historian is so far from dwelling upon, that he barely supplies us with the means to establish it at all, we see in the circumstances of the conspiracy, the *natural recoil* of David's sin; and in his punishment, retributive as it is, so strictly retributive, that it must have stricken his conscience as a judgment, even had there been no warning voice concerning it, the accomplishment by means the most easy and unconstrained, of all that Nathan had uttered, to the syllable.

II. There is another incident connected

* 2 Sam. xii. 12,

with this part of the history of David, which I have pondered, alternately accepting and rejecting it, as still further corroborating the opinion I have expressed, that the fortunes of David turned upon this one sin—that having mounted to their high-mark, they henceforward began, and continued to ebb away—this one sin which, according to Scripture, itself eclipsed every other. For though it would not be difficult to name sundry instances of ignorance, of negligence, of inconsideration, of infirmity in the life of David besides this, it is nevertheless said, that ‘ he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside in anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, *save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite**.’ I propose, however, this coincidence for the reason I have said,

* 1 Kings xv. 5. See Sanderson, Serm. iv. ad Aulam, p. 79, fol.

not without some hesitation ; though at the same time, quite without concern for the safety of my cause, it being a very valuable property of the argument by which I am endeavouring to establish the credibility of Scripture, that any member of it, if unsound or unsatisfactory, may be detached without further injury to the whole, than the mere loss of that member entails.

This, therefore, I perceive, or think I perceive, that David became thoroughly encumbered by his connexion with *Joab, the captain of his armies* ; that he was too suspicious to trust him, and too weak to dismiss him ; that this officer, by some chance or other, had established a despotic control over the king ; and that it is not unreasonable to believe (and here lies the coincidence) that when *David made him the partner and secret agent of his guilty purpose touching*

Uriah, he sold himself into his hands ; that in that fatal letter he sealed away his liberty, and surrendered it up to this his unscrupulous accomplice. Certain it is, that during all the latter years of his reign, David was little more than a nominal king.

Joab, no doubt, was by nature a man that could do and dare—a bold captain in bad times. The faction of Saul was so strong, that David could at first scarcely call the throne his own, or choose his servants according to his pleasure; and Joab, an able warrior, though sometimes avenging his own private quarrels at the expense of his sovereign's honour, and thereby vexing him at the heart, was not to be displaced; he was then too hard for David, as the king himself complains*. But as yet, David was not tongue-tied at least. He openly,

* 2 Sam, iii. 39

and without reserve, reprobated the conduct of Joab in slaying Abner, though he had the excuse, such as it was, of taking away the life of the man by whose hand his brother Asahel had fallen. Moreover, he so far asserted his own authority, as to make him rend his clothes, and gird him with sack-cloth, and mourn before this very Abner, whom he had thus vindictively laid low; doubtless a bitter and mortifying penance to a man of the stout heart of Joab, and such as argued David, who insisted upon it, to be as yet in his own dominions supreme. Circumstances might constrain him still to employ this famous captain, but he had not at least (young as his authority then was) yielded himself up to his imperious subject. On the contrary, waxing stronger, as he did, every day, and the remnant of Saul's party dispersed, he became

the king of Israel in fact, as well as in name, his throne established not only upon law, but upon public opinion too, so that ‘whatever the king did,’ we are told, ‘pleased all the people*.’ He was now in a condition to rule for himself, and for himself he did rule (whatever had become of Joab in the mean season); for we presently find him appointing that officer to the command of his army by his own act and deed, simply because he happened to be the man to win that rank when it was proposed by David as the prize of battle to any individual of his whole host, who should first get up the gutter and smite the Jebusites at the storming of Zion†. And whoever will peruse the eighth and tenth chapters of the second Book of Samuel, in which are recorded the noble achievements of David at this bright period

* 2 Sam. iii. 36.

† 2 Sam. v. 8. 1. Chron. xi. 6.

of his life, his power abroad and his policy at home, the energy which he threw into the national character, and the respect which he commanded for it throughout all the East, will perceive that he reigned without a restraint and without a rival. Now comes the guilty act; the fatal stumbling-block against which he dashed his foot, and fell so pernicious a height. And henceforwards I see, or imagine I see, Joab usurping by degrees an authority which he had not before; taking upon himself too much; executing or disregarding David's orders, as it suited his own convenience; and finally conspiring against his throne and the rightful succession of his line. Again; I perceive, if I mistake not, the hands of David tied; his efforts to disembarass himself of his oppressor feeble and ineffectual: his resentment set at nought; his punishments, though

just, resisted by his own subject, and successfully resisted. For I find him suggesting to David the recall of Absalom after his banishment, through the widow of Tekoah, in a manner to excite the suspicion of the king*. ‘Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?’ were words in which probably more was meant than met the ear. It is not unlikely (though the passage is altogether mysterious and obscure) that there was then some secret understanding between the soldier and the future rebel, which was only interrupted by the impetuosity of Absalom, who resented Joab’s delay, and set fire to his barley†; an injury which he must have had some reason to feel Joab durst not resent, and which, in fact, even in spite of the fury of his natural character, he did not resent. Howbeit, he remembered it

* 2 Sam. xiv. 19.

† 2 Sam. xiv. 30.

in the rebellion which now broke out, and took his personal revenge whilst he was professedly fighting the battle of David, to whom his interest or his passion decided him for this time to be true. ‘Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom,’ was the parting charge which the king gave to this dangerous champion as he went forth with the host; in the hearing of all the people he gave it, and to all the captains who were with him. It was the thing nearest his heart. For here it may be observed, that David’s strong *parental feelings*, of which we have many occasional glimpses, give an *identity* to his character, which, in itself, marks it to be a real one. The fear of the servants to tell him that his infant was dead*; the advice of Jonadab, ‘a subtle man,’ who had read David’s dis-

* 2 Sam. xii. 18.

position right, to Amnon, to feign himself sick, that ‘*when his father came to see him,*’ he might prefer to him his request*; his ‘weeping so sore’ for the death of this son, and then again, his anguish subsided, ‘his soul longing to go forth’ to the other son who had slain him†; the little trait which escapes in the history of Adonijah’s rebellion, another of his children, that ‘his father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, why hast thou done so‡?’ are all evidently features of one and the same individual. So these last instructions to his officers touching the safety of Absalom, even when he was in arms against him, are still uttered in the same spirit; a spirit which seems, even at this moment, far more engrossed with the care of his child, than with the event of his battle. ‘Deal gently for my

* 2 Sam. xiii. 5. † 2 Sam. xiii. 36. ‡ 1 Kings, i. 6.

sake with Absalom.' Joab heard, indeed, but heeded not; he had lost all reverence for the king's commands; nothing could be more deliberate than his infraction of this one, probably the most imperative which had ever been laid upon him: it was not in the fury of the fight that he forgot the commission of mercy, and cut down the young man with whom he was importuned to deal tenderly, but as he was hanging in a tree, helpless and hopeless; himself directed to the spot by the steps of another; in cold blood; but remembering perhaps his barley, and more of which we know not, and caring nothing for a king whose *guilty secret he had shared*, he thrust him through the heart with his three darts, and then made his way, with countenance unabashed, into the chamber of his royal master, where he was weeping and mourning for Absalom. The bitterness of

death must have been nothing to David, compared with the feelings of that hour when his conscience smote him (as it doubtless did) with the complicated trouble and humiliation into which his deed of lust and blood had thus sunk him down. The rebellion itself, the fruit of it (as I hold); the audacious disobedience of Joab to the moving intreaties of the parent, that his favourite son's life might be spared, rebel as he was, felt to be the fruit of that sin too; for by that sin it was that he had delivered himself and his character bound hand and foot, to the tender mercies of Joab, who had no touch of pity in him. The sequel is of a piece with the opening; Joab imperious, and David, the once high-minded David, abject in spirit and tame to the lash. 'Thou hast shamed this day the face of all thy servants. Arise, go forth, and speak com

fortably to thy servants; for, I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night, and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befel thee from thy youth up until now*.' The passive king yields to the menace, for what can he do? and with a cheerful countenance and a broken heart, obeys the commands of his subject, and sits in the gate. But this is not all. David now sends a message to Amasa, a kinsman whom Absalom had set over his rebel army; it is a proposal, perhaps a secret proposal, to make him captain over his host in the room of Joab. The measure might be dictated at once by policy, Amasa being now the leader of a powerful party whom David had to win, and by disgust at the recent perfidy of Joab, and a determination to break away

* 2 Sam, xix 7.

from him at whatever cost. Amasa accepts the offer; but in the very first military enterprise on which he is despatched, Joab accosts him with the friendly salutation of the East, and taking advantage of the unguarded moment, draws a sword from under his garment, smites him under the fifth rib, and leaves him a bloody corpse in the highway. Then does he calmly take upon himself to execute the commission with which Amasa had been charged, and this done, 'he returns to Jerusalem,' we read, 'unto the king,' and once more he is 'over all the host of Israel.'

It is needless to point out how extreme a helplessness on the part of David this whole transaction indicates. Here is the general of his own choice assassinated in an act of duty by his own subject, his commission usurped by the murderer, and David, once

the most popular and powerful of sovereigns, saying not a word. The dishonour, indeed, he felt keenly; felt it to his dying day, and in his very latest breath gave utterance to it*; but Joab has him in the toils, and extricate himself he cannot. The want of cordiality between them was now manifest enough, however the original cause might be conjectured, rather than known, and when Adonijah prepares his revolt,—for another enemy now sprang up in David's own house,—to Joab he makes his overtures†, having observed him, no doubt, to be a thorn in the king's side; nor are the overtures rejected; and amongst other facts developed in this second conspiracy, it incidentally appears, that the ordinary dwelling-place of Joab was ‘in *the wilderness*‡,’ as if suspicious and suspected, a house within the walls of

* 1 Kings ii. 5. † 1 Kings i. 7. ‡ 1 Kings ii. 34.

Jerusalem was not the one in which he would venture to lay his head. It is remarkable that this formidable traitor, from whose thralldom David in the flower of his age, and the splendour of his military renown, could never, we have seen, disengage himself, fell at once, and whilst whatever popularity he might have with the army must have been fresh as ever, before the arm of Solomon, a stripling, if not a beardless boy ; who, taking advantage of a fresh instance of treachery in this hardened adventurer, fearlessly gave command to ‘ fall upon him and bury him, that he might thus take away,’ as he said, ‘ the innocent blood which Joab shed, from him, and from the house of his father ; when he fell upon two men more righteous and better than himself, and slew them with the sword, his father David not knowing thereof ; to wit, Abner, the son of Ner,

captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa, the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah*. But Solomon had as yet a clear conscience, which David had forfeited with respect to Joab; this it was that armed the youth with a moral courage which his father had once known what it was to have, when he went forth as a shepherd-boy against Goliath, and which he afterwards knew what it was to want, when he crouched before Joab, as a king. So true it is, that the ‘wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous is bold as a lion.’

And now can any say that God winked at this wickedness of his servant? That the man after his own heart, for such in the main he was, frail as he proved himself, sinned grievously, and sinned with impunity? On the contrary, this deed was the

* 1 Kings ii. 32.

pivot upon which David's fortunes turned ; that done, and he was undone ; then did God raise up enemies against him for it, out of his own house, for ' the thing,' as we are expressly told, ' displeased the Lord * ;' thenceforward the days of his years became full of evil, and if he lived, (for the Lord *caused death to pass* from himself to the child, by a vicarious dispensation †,) it was to be a king, with more than kingly sorrows, but with little of kingly power ; to be banished by his son ; bearded by his servant ; betrayed by his friends ; deserted by his people ; bereaved of his children ; and to feel all, all these bitter griefs, bound, as it were, by a chain of complicated cause and effect, to this one great, original transgression ;—this was surely no escape from the penalty of his crime, though it was still

* 2 Sam. ii. 27. xii. 11. † 2 Sam. xii. 13. הַעֲבִיר

granted him to live and breathe—God would not slay even Cain, nor suffer others to slay him, whose punishment, nevertheless, was greater than he could bear—but rather it was a lesson to him and to us, how dreadful a thing it is to tempt the Almighty to let loose his plagues upon us, and how true is he to his word, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ saith the Lord.

Meanwhile, by means of the fall of David, however it may have caused some to blaspheme, God may have also provided in his mercy, that many since David should stand upright; the frailty of one may have prevented the miscarriage of thousands; saints, with his example before their eyes, may have learned to walk humbly, and so to walk surely, when they might otherwise have presumed and perished; and sinners, even the men of the darkest and most deadly

sins, may have been saved from utter desperation and self-abandonment, by remembering David and all his trouble ; and that, deep as he was in guilt, he was not so deep but that his bitter cries for mercy, under the remorse and anguish of his spirit, could even yet pierce the ear of an offended God, and move him to put away his sin.

LECTURE IV.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 1.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

THE subject of my last sermon compelled me to anticipate some of the events of David's history according to the order of time. I must now, therefore, revert to certain incidents in it, which it would then have interrupted my argument to notice, but which are too important as evidences of its credibility, to be altogether overlooked.

I. The conspiracy of Absalom being now organised, it only remained to try the issue by force of arms; and here another coincidence presents itself.

In the seventeenth chapter of the second Book of Samuel, we read that 'David arose,

and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan' (v. 22); and in the same chapter, that ' Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him' (v. 24); and that ' they pitched in the land of Gilead' (26). Now in the next chapter, where an account is given of a review of David's troops, and of their going forth to the fight, it is said, ' so the people went out into the field against Israel, and the battle was in the *wood of Ephraim**.' But is not the sacred historian, in this instance, off his guard, and having already placed his combatants on one side the river, does he not now place his combat on the other? Is he not mistaken in his geography, and does he not hereby betray himself and the credit of his narrative? Certain it is, that Absalom had passed over Jordan east-

* 2 Sam. xviii. 6.

ward, and so had David, with their respective followers, pitching in Gilead; and no less certain it is, that the tribe of *Ephraim* lay altogether west of Jordan, and had not a foot of ground beyond it: how then was the battle in the wood of *Ephraim*? By any fabulous writer this seeming difficulty would have been avoided, or care would have been taken that, at least, it should be explained. But the Book of Samuel, written by one familiar with the events he describes, and with the scenes in which they occurred; written, moreover, in the simplicity of his heart, probably without any notion that his veracity could be called in question, or that he should ever be the subject of suspicious scrutiny, contents itself with stating the naked facts, and then leaves it to the critics to reconcile them as they can. Turn we then to the twelfth chapter of the Book of

Judges. There we are told of an attack made by the *Ephraimites* upon Jephthah, in the land of *Gilead*, on pretence of a wrong done them when they were not invited by the latter to take part in his successful invasion of Ammon. It was a memorable struggle. Jephthah, indeed, endeavoured to soothe the angry assailants by words of peace, but when he spake of peace, they only made themselves ready for battle. Accordingly, 'he gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim.' Ephraim was discomfited with signal slaughter; those who fell in the action, and those who were afterwards put to death upon the test of the word *Shibboleth*, amounting to forty-two thousand men; almost an extinction of all the fighting men of Ephraim. Now an event so singular, and so sanguinary, was not likely to pass away without a memorial;

and what memorial so natural for the grave of a tribe, as its own name for ever assigned to the spot where it fell, the Aceldama of their race?

Thus, then, may we account most naturally for a ‘*wood of Ephraim*’ in the land of *Gilead*; a point which would have perplexed us not a little, had the Book of Judges never come down to us, or, coming down to us, had no mention been made in it of Jephthah’s victory; and though we certainly cannot *prove* that the battle of David and Absalom was fought on precisely the same field as this of Jephthah and the Ephraimites some hundred and twenty years before, yet it is highly probable that this was the case, for both the battles were assuredly in *Gilead*, and both apparently in that part of *Gilead* which bordered upon one of the *fords of Jordan*.

Thus does a seeming error turn out, on examination, to be an actual pledge of the good faith of the historian ; and the unconcern with which he tells his own tale, in his own way, never pausing to correct, to balance, or adjust, to supply a defect, or to meet an objection, is the conduct of a witness to whom it never occurred that he had anything to conceal, or anything to fear ; or, if it did occur, to whom it was well known that truth is mighty, and will prevail.

II. David having won the battle, and recovered his throne, prepares to repass the Jordan, and return once more to his capital. His friends again congregate around him, for the prosperous have many friends. Amongst them, however, were some who had been true to him in the day of his adversity, and the aged Barzillai, a Gileadite,

who had provided the king with sustenance whilst he lay at Mahanaim, and when his affairs were critical, presents himself before him. He had won David's heart. The king now entreats him to accompany him to his court, 'Come thou even with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.' But the unambitious Barzillai pleads four score years as a bar against beginning the life of a courtier, and chooses rather to die in his own city, and be buried by the grave of his father and of his mother. His son, however, had life before him: 'Behold thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my lord the king: and do to him what shall seem good unto thee. And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee*.' So he went with the

* 2 Sam. xix. 37.

king. Thus begins, and thus ends, the history of Chimham; he passes away from the scene, and what David did for him, or whether he did anything for him, beyond providing him a place at his table, and recommending him in common with many others to Solomon before he died, does not appear. Singular, however, it is, and if ever there was a coincidence which carried with it the stamp of truth, it is this, that in the forty-first chapter of Jeremiah, an historical chapter, in which an account is given of the murder of Gedaliah, the officer whom Nebuchadnezzar had left in charge of Judea, as its governor, when he carried away the more wealthy of its inhabitants captive to Babylon, we read that the Jews, fearing for the consequences of this bloody act, and apprehending the vengeance of the Chaldeans, prepared for a flight into Egypt, so

‘ they departed,’ the narrative continues, ‘ and dwelt in the habitation of *Chimham*, which is by *Bethlehem*, to go to enter into Egypt’ (v. 17). It is impossible to imagine anything more incidental than the mention of this estate near *Bethlehem*, which was the habitation of *Chimham*—yet how well does it tally with the spirit of David’s speech to Barzillai, some four hundred years before! for what can be more probable, than that David, whose birth-place was this very *Bethlehem*, and whose patrimony in consequence lay there, having undertaken to provide for *Chimham*, should have bestowed it in whole, or in part, as the most flattering reward he could confer, a personal, as well as a royal, mark of favour, on the son of the man who had saved his life, and the lives of his followers in the hour of their distress; and that, to that very day, when Jeremiah

wrote, it should have remained in the possession of the family of Chimham, and have been a land called after his own name?

III. I proceed with the history of David, in which we can scarcely advance a step without having our attention drawn to some new, though perhaps subtle, incident, which marks at once the reality of the facts, and the fidelity of the record. No doubt the surface of the narrative is perfectly satisfactory; but beneath the surface, there is a certain substratum now appearing, and presently losing itself again, which is the proper field of my inquiry. Here I find the true material of which I am in search; coincidences shy and unobtrusive, not courting notice, as far from it as possible, but having chanced to attract it, sustaining not only notice, but scrutiny; such matters as might be overlooked on a cursory perusal of the

text a hundred times, and which indeed would stand very little chance of any other fate than neglect, unless the mind of the reader had been previously put upon challenging them as they pass. Therefore it is, that I feel often incapable of doing justice to my subject before any congregation, however familiar with holy writ. The full force of the argument can only be felt by him who pursues it for himself, when he is in his chamber and is still; his assent taken captive before he is aware of it; his doubts, if any he had, melting away under the *continual dropping* of minute particles of evidence upon his mind, as it proceeds in its investigation. It is difficult, it is scarcely possible to impart this sympathy to the hearer. And even when I can grasp an incident sufficiently substantial to detach and present to your consideration, I still am con-

scious that it is not *launched* to advantage ; that a thousand little preparations are lacking in order that it may leave the slips (if I may venture upon the expression) with a motion that shall make it win its way ; that the plunge with which I am compelled to let it fall, provokes a resistance to which it does not deserve to be exposed. I proceed, however, with the history of David, and to a passage in it which has partly suggested these remarks. When Saul in his fury had slain, by the hand of Doeg, Ahimelech the high-priest, and all the priests of the Lord, ‘ one of the sons of Ahimelech,’ we read, ‘ named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David*.’ David received him kindly, saying unto him, ‘ abide thou with me, fear not ; for he that seeketh my life, seeketh thy life ; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.’ Abiathar

* 1 Sam. xxii. 20.

had brought with him the ephod, the high-priest's mysterious scarf; and his father being dead, he appears to have been made high-priest in his stead, so far as David had it then in his power to give him that office, and to have attended upon him and his followers*. These particulars we gather from several passages of the first Book of Samuel.

We hear now nothing more of Abiathar (except that he was confirmed in his office, together with a colleague, when David was established in his kingdom) for nearly thirty years. Then he re-appears, having to play not an inconspicuous part in David's councils, on occasion of the rebellion of Absalom. Now here we find, that though he is still in his office of priest, Zadok (the colleague to whom I alluded) appears to have obtained the first place in the confidence and considera-

* 1 Sam. xxx. 7.

tion of David. When David sends the Ark back, which he probably thought it irreverent to make the partner of his flight, and delivers his commands to this effect, it may be remarked that he does not address himself to Abiathar, though Abiathar was there, but to *Zadok*. Zadok takes the lead in everything. The king says to *Zadok*, ‘Carry back the Ark of God into the city*.’—and again, ‘the king said unto *Zadok* the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace;’ and when Zadok and Abiathar are mentioned together at this period, Zadok is placed foremost. No doubt Abiathar was honoured by David; there is evidence enough of this (v. 35); but many trifles lead us to conclude, that herein he attained not unto his companion.

Now, unquestionably, it cannot be as-

* 2 Sam. xv. 25.

serted with confidence, where there is no positive document to substantiate the assertion, that Abiathar felt his associate in the priesthood to be his rival in the state, his more than successful rival; yet that such a feeling should find a place in the breast of Abiathar seems most natural, seems almost inevitable, when we take into account that these two priests were the representatives of two *rival houses*, over one of which, a prophecy affecting its honour, and well nigh its existence, was hanging unfulfilled. For Zadok, be it observed, was descended from Eleazar, the eldest of the sons of Aaron, Abiathar from Ithamar, the youngest*; and so from the family of Eli, a family of which it had been foretold some hundred and fifty years before, that the priesthood should pass from it. Could

* 1 Chron. xxiv. 3.

Abiathar read the signs of his time without alarm? or fail to suspect (what did prove the fact) that the curse which had tarried so long, was now again in motion, and that the ancient office of his fathers was in jeopardy; a curse, too, comprising circumstances of signal humiliation, calculated beyond measure to exasperate the sufferer; even that the house of Eli, which God had once said should walk before him for ever, should be far from him; even that he would raise up (that is from another house) a faithful priest that should do according to that which was in his heart and his mind; and that the house of that man should be sure built; and that they of the house of Eli which were left, should come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of

bread*? Abiathar must have had a tamer spirit than he gave subsequent proof of, if he could have witnessed the elevation of one in whom this bitter threat seemed advancing to its accomplishment, and in whom it was in fact accomplished, with complacency; if he could see him seated by his side in the dignity of the high-priesthood, and favoured at his expense by the more frequent smiles of his sovereign, without a wounded spirit.

Now having possessed ourselves of this secret key, namely, *jealousy of his rival*, a key not delivered into our hands directly by the historian, but accidentally found by ourselves (and here is its value), let us apply it to the incidents of Abiathar's subsequent conduct, and observe whether they will not answer to it. We have seen Abiathar flying

* 1 Sam. ii. 30.

from the vengeance of Saul to David ; protected by David in the wilderness ; made by David his priest, virtually before Saul's death*, and formally when he succeeded to Saul's throne†. We have seen, too, Zadok united with him in his office, and David giving signs of preferring Zadok before him ; a preference the more marked, and the more galling, because Abiathar was undoubtedly the *high-priest* (as the sequel will prove) and Zadok his *vicar* only, or sagan‡.

This being the state of things, let us now observe the issue. When David was forced to withdraw for a season from Jerusalem, by the conspiracy of Absalom, Zadok and Abiathar were left behind in the capital, charged with the office of forwarding to the

* 1 Sam. xxiii. 2—6.

† 2 Sam. viii. 17.

‡ See Lightfoot's Works, vol. i. 911, 912, fol.

king any intelligence which his friends within the walls might communicate to them, that it was for his advantage to know. Ahimaz, the son of Zadok, and Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, (the sons are named after the same order as their fathers,) are the secret messengers by whom it is to be conveyed ; and on one occasion, the only one in which their services are recorded, we find them acting together*. But I observe that after the battle in which Absalom was slain, a battle which seems to have served as a test of the real loyalty of many of David's nominal friends, Ahimaz, the son of *Zadok*, and not Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, is at hand to carry the tidings of the victory to David, who had tarried behind at Mahanaim ; and this office he solicits from Joab, who had intended it for another, with the

* 2 Sam. xviii. 21.

utmost importunity, and the most lively zeal for the king's cause*. This, it will be said, proves but little; more especially as there is reason to believe that David was, at least, upon terms with Abiathar at a later period than this†. Still there may be thought something suspicious in the absence of the one messenger, at a moment so critical, as compared with the alacrity of the other; their office having been hitherto a joint one; it is not enough to *prove* that the loyalty of Abiathar and his house was waxing cool, though it accords with such a supposition. Let us, however, proceed. Within a few years of this time, probably about eight, another rebellion against David is set on foot by another of his sons. Adonijah is now the offender. He, too, prepares him chariots and horsemen, after the example of

* 2 Sam. xviii. 19—22.

† 2 Sam. xix. 11.

his brother. Moreover, he feels his way before he openly appears in arms. And to whom does he make his first overtures? 'He confers,' we read, 'with *Abiathar* the priest*,' having good reason, no doubt, for knowing that such an application might be made in that quarter with safety, if not with success. The event proved that he had not mistaken his man. 'Abiathar,' we learn, '*following Adonijah, helped him :*' not so Zadok; he, we are told, '*was not with Adonijah ;*' on the contrary, he was one of the first persons for whom David sent, that he might communicate with him in this emergency; his staunch and steadfast friend; and him he commissioned, together with Nathan the prophet, to set the crown upon the head of Solomon, and thereby to confound the councils of the rebels (v. 32, 34). Nor

* 1 Kings i. 7.

should we leave unnoticed, for they are facts which coincide with the view I have taken of Abiathar's disloyalty, and the cause of it, that one of the first acts of Solomon's reign was to banish the traitor 'to his own fields,' and to thrust him out of the priesthood, 'that he might fulfil' (so it is expressly said in the twenty-seventh verse of the second chapter of the first Book of Kings) 'the word of the Lord, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh,'—fulfil it, not by that act only, but by the other also, which followed and crowned the prophecy; for 'Zadok the priest,' it is added, 'did Solomon put in *the room of Abiathar*;' (v. 35) or, as the Septuagint translates it still more to our purpose, Zadok the priest did the king make *first priest* (εἰς ἱερέα πρῶτον) in the room of Abiathar; so that Abiathar, as I said, had been hitherto Zadok's superior;

his superior in office, and his inferior in honour; a position of all others calculated to excite in him the heart-burnings we have discovered, long smothered, but at last bursting forth, beginning in lukewarmness, and ending in rebellion.

This is all extremely natural; nothing can drop into its place better than the several parts of this history; not at all a prominent history, but rather a subordinate one; yet manifest as the relation which they bear to one another is, when they are once brought together, they are themselves dispersed through the Books of Samuel, of Kings, and of Chronicles, without the smallest arrangement or reference one to another; their succession not continuous; suspended by many and long intervals; intervals, occupied by matters altogether foreign from this subject; and after all, the integral portions of the

narrative, themselves defective ; there are gaps even here, which I think, indeed, may be filled up, as I have shown, with very little chance of error ; but still, that there should be any necessity even for this, argues the absence of all design, collusion, and contrivance in the historians.

IV. We have now followed David through the events of his chequered life ; it remains to contemplate him yet once more upon his death-bed, giving in charge the execution of his last wishes to Solomon his son. Probably in consideration of his youth, his inexperience, and the difficulties of his position, David thought it well to put him in possession of the characters of some of those with whom he would have to deal ; of those whom he had found faithful or faithless to himself ; that, on the one hand, his own promises of favour might not be forfeited, nor,

on the other, the confidence of the young monarch be misplaced. Now it is remarkable, that in this review of his friends and foes, David altogether overlooks Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. Joab he remembers, and all that he had done; Shimei he speaks of at some length, and puts Solomon upon his guard against him. Barzillai and his sons, and the service they had rendered him in the day of his adversity, are all recommended to his friendly consideration; but of Mephibosheth, who had played a part, such as it was, in the scenes of those eventful times, which had called forth, for good or evil, a Chimham, a Barzillai, a Shimei, and a Joab, he does not say a syllable. Yet he was under peculiar obligations to him. He had loved his father Jonathan. He had promised to show kindness to his house for ever. He had con-

firmed his promise by an oath. That oath he had repeated*. On his accession to the throne, he had evinced no disposition to shrink from it; on the contrary, he had studiously inquired after the family of Jonathan, and having found Mephibosheth, he gave him a place at his own table continually, for his father's sake, and secured to him all the lands of Saul †.

Let us, however, carefully examine the details of the history, and I think we shall be able to account satisfactorily enough for David's apparent neglect of the son of his friend; for I think we shall find violent cause to suspect that Mephibosheth had forfeited all claims to his kindness.

When David was driven from Jerusalem by the rebellion of Absalom, no Mephibosheth appeared to share with him his mis-

* 1 Sam. xx, 17.

† 2 Sam. x, 6, 7,

fortunes, or to support him by his name, a name at that moment of peculiar value to David, for Mephibosheth was the representative of the house of Saul. David naturally intimates some surprise at his absence; and when his servant Ziba appears, bringing with him a small present of bread and fruits, (the line of the king's flight having apparently carried him near the lands of Mephibosheth,) a present, however, offered on his own part, and not on the part of his master, David puts to him several questions, expressive of his suspicions of Mephibosheth's loyalty: 'What meanest thou by these? Where is thy master's son*?' Ziba replies in substance, that he had tarried at Jerusalem, waiting the event of the rebellion, and hoping that it might lead to the re-establishment of Saul's family on the throne.

* 2 Sam. xvi. 2, 3.

This might be true, or it might be false. The commentators appear to take for granted that it was a mere slander of Ziba, invented for the purpose of supplanting Mephibosheth in his possessions. I do not think this so certain. Ziba, I suspect, had some reason in what he said, though probably the colouring of the picture was his own. Certain it is, or all but certain, that the tribe of *Benjamin*, which was the tribe of Mephibosheth, did, in general, take part with the rebels. When David returned victorious, and Shimei hastened to make his peace with him, a thousand men of Benjamin accompanied him; and it was his boast that he came the first of ‘all the house of Joseph,’ to meet the king*, as though others of his tribe (for they of Benjamin were reckoned of the house of Joseph, the same mother having

* 2 Sam. xix. 17—20.

given birth to both) were yet behind. Went not then the heart of Mephibosheth in the day of battle with his brethren, rather than with his benefactor? David himself evidently believed the report of Ziba, and forthwith gave him his master's inheritance*. The battle is now fought, on which the fate of the throne hung in suspense, and David is the conqueror. And now, many who had forsaken, or insulted him in his distress, hasten to congratulate him on his triumph, and to profess their joy at his return; Mephibosheth amongst the rest. There is something touching in David's first greeting of him; 'Wherefore wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth?' A question not of curiosity, but of reproach. His ass was saddled, forsooth, that he might go, but Ziba, it seems, had taken it for himself, and

* 2 Sam. xvi. 4.

gone unto the king, and slandered him unto the king; and meanwhile, ‘thy servant was lame.’ The tale appears to be as lame as the tale-bearer. I think it clear, that Mephibosheth did not succeed in removing the suspicion of his disloyalty from David’s mind, notwithstanding the ostentatious display of his clothes unwashed, and beard untrimmed; weeds which the loss of his estate might very well have taught him to put on: for otherwise, would not David, in common justice both to Mephibosheth, and to Ziba, have punished the treachery of the latter, the lie by which he had imposed upon the king to his own profit, and to his master’s infinite dishonour and damage, by revoking altogether the grant of the lands which he had made him, under an impression which proved to be a mistake, and restoring them to their rightful owner, who had been in-

juriously supposed to have forfeited them by treason to the crown? He does, however, no such thing. To Mephibosheth, indeed, he gives back half, but that is all; and he leaves the other half still in the possession of Ziba; doing even thus much, in all probability, not as an act of justice, but out of tenderness to a son, even an unworthy son of Jonathan, whom he had loved as his own soul. And then, as if impatient of the wearisome exculpations of an ungrateful man, whose excuses were his accusations, he abruptly puts an end to the parley, (the conversation having been apparently much longer than is recorded,) with a '*Why speakest thou any more of thy matters?* I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land*.'

Henceforward, whatever act of grace he received at David's hands, was purely gra-

* 2 Sam. xix. 29.

tuitous. His unfaithfulness had released the king from his bond ; and that he lived, was perhaps rather of sufferance, than of right ; a consideration which serves to explain David's conduct towards him, as it is reported on an occasion subsequent to the rebellion. For when propitiation was to be made by seven of Saul's sons, for the sin of Saul in the slaughter of the Gibeonites, ' the king,' we read, ' spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, *because of the Lord's oath* that was between them, between David, and Jonathan the son of Saul* ;' as though he owed it to the oath only, and to the memory of his father's virtues, that he was not selected by David as one of the victims of that bloody sacrifice.

Now, under these circumstances, is it a subject for surprise ; is it not rather a most

* 2 Sam. xxi. 7.

natural and veracious coincidence, that David, in commending on his death-bed some of his staunch and trust-worthy friends to Solomon, his son, should have omitted all mention of Mephibosheth, dissatisfied as he was, and ever had been, with his explanations of very suspicious conduct, at a very critical hour? Considering him, with every appearance of reason, a waiter upon Providence, as such persons have been since called; a prudent man, who would see which way the battle went, before he made up his mind to which side he belonged? This coincidence is important, not merely as carrying with it evidence of a true story in all its details, which is my business with it; but also as disembarassing the incident itself of several serious difficulties which present themselves, on the ordinary supposition of Ziba's treachery, and Mephi-

bosheth's truth; difficulties which I cannot better explain, than by referring my hearers to the beautiful 'Contemplations' of Bishop Hall, whose view of these two characters is the common one, and who consequently finds himself, in this instance, (it will be perceived,) encumbered with his subject, and driven to the necessity of impugning the justice of David. It is further valuable, as exonerating the king of two other charges which have been brought against him, yet more serious than the last, even of indifference to the memory of his dearest friend, and disregard to the obligations of his solemn oath. But these are not the only instances in which the character of David, and indeed of the history itself, which treats of him, has suffered, from a neglect to make allowance for omissions in a very brief and desultory memoir, or from a want of more exact at-

tention to the under-current of the narrative, which would, in itself, very often supply those omissions.

These simple facts I leave to make their own impression. I will not weaken their effect by dwelling upon them longer, but commit them confidently to the consideration of every ingenuous hearer, be his spirit what it may, as testimonies to the *general* truth of Scripture not to be despised. At the same time, I may be permitted to confess for myself, that, during the course of the investigation of Holy Writ, which I have thus been put upon; into which I have gone by no means delicately; with a desire to follow after truth, lead me where it might; with no heated mind, (if I know myself,) and not without a full sense of the difficulties that occasionally cross the path; that during this investigation, the thought has forced itself

upon me very often and very powerfully, how extraordinary an act of presumption, to say the least of it, it is in any man to sport with documents so attested, upon the strength of a cursory, or perhaps of no examination of their contents whatever; and how immense a hazard he is running, who determines to set them aside, live as he lists, and abide the issue. I judge him not; but let not my soul be with his, lest I should find after all, that in that hour, when heaven and earth shall pass away, this word shall not pass away, and I remain 'to be confuted by the flames.'

LECTURE V.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 1.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

IN my last sermon, the history of the people of God was brought down to the reign of Solomon, and its *general* truth and accuracy (I think I may say) established by the application of a test which could scarcely fail us. The great schism of the tribes is now about to divide our attention between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah; but before I proceed to submit to you some observations upon the effects of it, both religious and political, on either kingdom, observations which will involve many more of those undesigned coincidences which are the burden of these Lectures, I must say a word upon the progress

of events towards the schism itself; for herein I discover combinations, of a kind which no ingenuity could possibly counterfeit, and to an extent which verifies a large portion of the Jewish annals. ‘By faith, Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed his children.’ On that occasion, *Judah* and *Ephraim* were made to stand conspicuous amongst the future founders of the Israelitish nation. ‘Judah,’ says the prophetic old man, ‘thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies: thy father’s children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up. He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, and as an old lion: who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh come; and unto him shall the

gathering of the people be*.' All this, and more, did Jacob foretel of this mighty tribe. Again, crossing his hands, and studiously laying the right upon the head of *Ephraim*, the younger of Joseph's children, 'Manasseh also shall be a people,' he exclaimed, 'and he also shall be great; but truly his *younger brother* shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And so he blessed them that day, saying, in thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as *Ephraim* and Manasseh†.' Thus did these two tribes, Judah and Ephraim, enter the land of promise some two hundred and forty years afterwards, with the Patriarch's blessing on their heads, God having conveyed it to them by his mouth, and being now about to work it out by the quiet operations of his own hands. As yet, neither

* Gen. xlix. 8.

† Gen. xlix. 20.

of them was much more powerful than his brethren, the latter less so ; Judah not exceeding one other of the tribes, at least, by more than twelve thousand men, and Ephraim actually the smallest of them all, with the single exception of Simeon*. The lot of Ephraim, however, fell upon a fair ground, and upon this lot, the disposing of which was of the Lord, turned very materially the fortunes of Ephraim ; it fell nearly in the midst of the tribes ; and accordingly, the invasion and occupation of Canaan being effected, at *Shiloh* in *Ephraim*, the Tabernacle was set up, there to abide three hundred years and upwards, *during all the time of the Judges*†. Hither, we read, Elkanah repaired year by year for worship and sacrifice ; here the lamp of God was never suffered to go out ‘ in the Temple of the Lord,’ (the expres-

* Numb. xxvi.

† Judges xxi. 19.

sion is remarkable,) ‘ where the Ark of God was* ;’ here Samuel ministered as a child, all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-Sheba, speedily perceiving that he was established to be a prophet, because all Israel was accustomed to resort annually to Shiloh, at the feasts †. *Shiloh*, therefore, in *Ephraim*, was the great *religious capital*, as it were, from the time of Joshua to Saul, the spot more especially consecrated to the honour of God, the resting-place of his tabernacle, of his prophets, and of his priests‡ ; whilst at no great distance from it, appears to have stood *Shechem*§, once the *political capital* of *Ephraim*, till civil war left it for a season in ruins, but which, even then, continued to be the gathering point of the tribes|| ; *Shechem*,

* 1 Sam. iii. 3.

† 1 Sam. iii. 20, 21.

‡ Ps. cxxxii. 6. ; lxxviii. 67. 1 Sam. ii. 14.

§ Judges xxi. 19. Josh. xxiv. 25, 26.

|| Josh. xxiv. 1. Judges ix. 2. 1 Kings xii. 1.

where was Jacob's well*, and where, accordingly, both literally and figuratively, was the prophecy of that patriarch fulfilled, 'Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a *well*, whose branches run over the wall†.'

Thus was this district in *Ephraim*, comprising Shiloh and Shechem, probably the most populous, certainly the most important, of any in all the Holy Land during the government of the Judges; and, constantly recruited by the confluence of strangers, Ephraim seems to have become (as Jerusalem became afterwards) what Jacob again foretold, 'a multitude of nations.'

There are other and more minute incidents left upon record, all tending to establish the same fact. For I observe, that

* John iv. 6.

† See Lightfoot, v. i. 49 fol.

amongst the Judges, many, whether themselves of Ephraim or not, do appear to have repaired thither as to the proper seat of government. I find that Deborah ‘dwelt under the palm-tree, between Ramah and Bethel, in Mount *Ephraim*,’ and that there the children of Israel went up to her for judgment*. I find that Gideon, who was of Ophrah in Manasseh, where he appears in general to have lived, and where he was at last buried, had, nevertheless, a family at *Shechem*, it being incidentally said, that the mother of his son Abimelech resided there, and that there Abimelech himself was born†: a trifle in itself, yet enough, I think, to suggest, that at *Shechem* in *Ephraim*, Gideon did occasionally dwell, the discharge of his judicial functions, like those of Pilate at Jerusalem, probably constraining him to

* Judges iv. 5.

† Judges viii. 27—32 ; ix. 1.

a residence which he might not otherwise have chosen. I find this same Shechem the head-quarters of this same Abimelech, and the support of his cause when he usurped the government of Israel*. And I subsequently find Tola, though a man of Issachar, dwelling in Shamir, in Mount *Ephraim*, (Shechem having been recently laid waste,) and judging Israel twenty and three years†.

Nor is this all. The comparative importance of Ephraim amongst the tribes during the time of the judges, is further detected in the tone of authority, not to say menace, which it occasionally assumes towards its weaker brethren. Gideon leads several of the tribes against the Midianites, but Ephraim had not been consulted. ‘Why hast thou served us thus,’ is the angry remonstrance of the Ephraimites, ‘that thou

* Judges ix. 22.

† Judges x. 1.

calledst us not when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him harshly*.’ Gideon stoops before the storm; he disputes not the vast superiority of Ephraim, his gleaning being more than another’s grapes. Jephthah, in later times, ventures upon a similar invasion of the children of Ammon, and discomfits them with a great slaughter, but he, too, without Ephraim’s help or cognizance: again the pride of this powerful tribe is wounded, and ‘ they gather themselves together, and go northward, and say unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? we will burn thine house upon thee with fire †.’—All this, the unreasonable conduct of a party conscious that it has the law of the strongest on its side, and, by virtue of that law, claim-

* Judges viii. 1.

† Judges xii. 1.

ing to itself the office of dictator amongst the neighbouring tribes. Well then might David express himself with regard to the support he expected from this tribe, in terms of more than common emphasis, when at last seated on the throne, his title acknowledged throughout Israel, he reviews the resources of his consolidated empire, and exclaims, ‘ *Ephraim is the strength of my head**.’ Accordingly, all the ten tribes are sometimes expressed under the comprehensive name of Ephraim†—and the gate of Jerusalem which looked towards Israel appears to have been called, emphatically, the gate of Ephraim‡—and Ephraim and Judah together represent the whole of the people of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba§.

In tracing the seeds of the future disso-

* Psalm lx. 7.

† 2 Chron. xxv. 6 and 7.

‡ 2 Kings xiv. 13,

§ Isaiah vii. 9—17, et alibi.

lution of the ten from the two tribes, I further remark, that whilst Samuel himself remains at Ramah, a border town of Benjamin and Ephraim, (for Shiloh and Shechem were probably now in possession of the Philistines,) there to sit in judgment on such causes as Ephraim and the northern states should bring before him, he sends his sons to be judges in Beer-sheba*, a southern town belonging to Judah †, as though there was already some reluctance between these rival tribes to resort to the same tribunal: and the fierce words that passed between the men of *Israel* and the men of *Judah*, on the subject of the restoration of David to the throne, the former claiming ten parts in him, the latter nearness of kin‡, still indicate that the breach was gradually widening, and that however sudden was the final dis-

* 1 Sam. viii. 2. † Josh. xv. 28. ‡ 2 Sam. xix. 43.

ruption of the bond of union, events had weakened it long before. Indeed, humanly speaking, nothing could in all probability have preserved it, but a continuance of the government by judges, under God; who, taken from various tribes, and according to no established order, might have secured the commonwealth from that jealousy which an hereditary possession of power by any one tribe was sure to create, and did create; and which burst out in that bitter cry of Israel, at the critical moment of the separation, ‘*What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse—to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David*.*’ And so, by the natural motions of the human heart, did God take vengeance of the people whom he had chosen, for rejecting him for their sovereign,

* 1 Kings xii. 16.

and a king, indeed, he gave them, as they desired, but he gave him in his wrath.

Thus have we detected, by the apposition of many distinct particulars, a *gradual tendency of the Ten Tribes to become confederate under Ephraim*; an event, to which the local position, numerical superiority, and the seat of national worship, long fixed within the borders of Ephraim, together conspired.

But meanwhile, it may be discovered in like manner, that *Judah and Benjamin* were also, on their part, knitting themselves in close alliance; a union promoted by contiguity; by the sympathy of being the only two royal tribes; by the connexion of the house of David with the house of Saul, (the political importance of which, David appears to have considered, when he made it a preliminary of his league with Abner, that

Michal should be restored, whose heart he had nevertheless lost*;) and finally, and perhaps above all, by the peculiar position selected by the Almighty†, for the great national temple which was soon to rob Ephraim of his ancient honours‡; for it was not to be planted in Judah only, or in Benjamin only, but on the confines of both; so that whilst the altars, and the holy place, were to stand within the borders of the one tribe, the courts of the temple were to extend into the borders of the other tribe§, and thus, the two were to be riveted together, as it were, by a cramp, bound by a sacred and everlasting bond, being in a condition to exclaim, in a sense peculiarly their own, ‘the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are we.’

* 2 Sam. iii. 13. † 1 Chron. xxviii. 11. ‡ Ps. lxxviii. 67.

§ Comp. Josh. xv. 63, and xviii. 28; and see Lightfoot, v. i. p. 1050 fol.

We have thus traced, by means of the hints with which Scripture supplies us, (for little more than hints have we had,) the *two great confederacies* into which the tribes were gradually, perhaps unwittingly, subsiding; as well as some of the circumstances by which either confederacy was cemented. Let us pursue the subject, but still by means of the under-current of the history only, towards the schism.

And now Ephraim was called upon to witness preparations for the transfer of the seat of national worship from himself to his great rival, with something, we may believe, of the anguish of Phinehas' wife, when she heard that the Ark of God was taken, and Shiloh to be no longer its resting-place; and Ich-abod might be the name for the mothers of Ephraim at that hour to give to their offspring, seeing that the glory was

departing from among them*. For what desolation and disgrace were felt to accompany this loss, may be gathered from more passages than one in Jeremiah, where he threatens Jerusalem with a like visitation, ‘ I will do unto this house,’ (saith the Lord, by the mouth of the prophet,) ‘ which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you, and to your fathers, as I *have done to Shiloh*. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the *whole seed of Ephraim*.’ And again—‘ I will make this house *like Shiloh*, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth†.’ With a heavy heart, then, must this high-spirited and ambitious tribe have found that ‘ the place which God had chosen to set his name there,’ (so often

* 1 Sam. iv. 21.

† Jeremiah vii. 14, 15 ; xxvi. 6.

spoken of by Moses, and the choice suspended so long,) was at length determined, and determined against him; that his expectation (for such would probably be indulged) that God would finally fix his seat where he had so long fixed his Tabernacle, was overthrown; that the Messiah, whom some sanguine interpreters of the prophets amongst his sons had declared should come from between his feet, was not to be of him*; but that ‘refusing the tabernacle of Joseph, and not choosing any longer the tribe of *Ephraim*, (mark the patriotic exultation with which the Psalmist proclaims this,) God chose the tribe of *Judah* and Mount Zion, which he loved†.’

Such was the posture of the nation of

* See on this subject, Allix, *Reflections upon the Four last Books of Moses*, p. 180.

† Ps. lxxviii. 67.

Israel, such the temper of the times, ‘ a breach,’ as it were, ‘ ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant,’ when Solomon began to collect workmen, and to levy taxes throughout all Israel, for those vast and costly structures which he reared, even ‘ the house of the Lord and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem*,’ besides many more ; in some of them, indeed, showing himself the pious founder, or the patriot prince ; but in some, the luxurious sensualist ; and in some again, the dissolute patron of idolatry†. On, however, he went ; and as if in small things as well as great, this growing division amongst the tribes (fatal as it was in many respects to prove) was ever to be fostered ; as if the coming event was on every occasion to be casting its

* 1 Kings ix. 15.

† 1 Kings xi. 7.

shadow before, a separate ruler, we read, ‘ was placed over all the charge of *the house of Joseph** ;’ that is, one individual was made overseer over the work, or the tribute, or both, of the *ten tribes* ; for so I understand the phrase, agreeably to its meaning in other passages of Scripture†. And who was he? —a young man, an industrious man, a mighty

* 1 Kings xi. 28.

† See 2 Sam. xix. 20, and Pole *in loc.* πρότερος παντὸς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἰσχυρὸς Ἰωσήφ. Sept. See 1 Chron. v. 2. The rights of primogeniture, which Reuben had forfeited, appear to have been divided between Judah and Joseph: to Judah, the headship; to Joseph the double portion of the eldest son. Thus, the people of Israel became *biceps*, and were comprised under the names of the two heads. See also Ps. lxxvii. 16, and Judges x. 9, where the house of Ephraim is synonymous with the house of Joseph.

Lightfoot considers Joseph to have been the principal family while the Ark was at Shiloh, and all Israel to have been named after it, as in Ps. lxxx. 1, but that when God refused Joseph, and chose Judah for the chief, Ps. lxxviii. 68, 69, then there began, and continued, a difference and distinction betwixt Israel and Judah, Joseph and Judah, Ephraim and Judah, the rest of the tribes being called by all these names, in opposition to Judah.—Lightfoot, i. 66 fol,

man of valour, (for these qualities Solomon made choice of him,) and above all, a man of *Ephraim**; *Jeroboam* it was.

It is impossible to imagine events working more steadily towards a given point, than here. The knot had already shown itself far from indissoluble, and now, time, opportunity, and a skilful hand, combine to loose it. Here we have a great body of artificers, almost an army of themselves, kept together some twenty years—Ephraimites and their colleagues engaged in works consecrated to the glory and aggrandizement of Judah and Benjamin, rather than to their own—Ephraimites contributing to the removal of the seat of government from Ephraim to Judah—Ephraimites paying taxes great and grievous, not merely to the erection of a national place of worship, (for

* 1 Kings xi. 26.

to this they might have given consent, the command being of God,) but to the construction of palaces for princes, never again to be of their own line; and temples for the idols of those princes, living and dead, which were expressly contrary to the command of God—And lastly, we have an Ephraimite, even Jeroboam, with every talent for mischief, endowed with every opportunity for exercising it; put into an office which at once invested him with authority, and secured him from suspicion, so that his future crown was but the consummation of his present intrigues; the issue of his own subtlety, and the people's discontent. Nor is this matter of conjecture. Is it not written in the Book of Kings, (most casually, however,) that the people of Israel, I speak of Israel as distinguished from Judah and Benjamin, in the first moment of

madness, on the accession of Rehoboam, wreaked their vengeance—upon whom, of all men?—upon Adoniram, the very man whom Solomon, his father, had appointed to levy men and means throughout Israel, the tax-gatherer for the erection of these stupendous works! and him, the victim of popular indignation, did all Israel stone with stones till he died*. The wisdom and policy of Solomon, indeed, in spite of his faults and follies, upheld his empire to the last, and saved it from falling in pieces before the time; but how completely the fulness of that time was come, is clear, when no sooner was he dead, than his son, and rightful successor, found it expedient to hasten to *Shechem*, there to meet all Israel, conscious as he was, that however his title was admitted by Judah, it was quite another thing,

* 1 Kings v. 14; xii. 18.

whether *Ephraim* would give in his allegiance too, and, as the event proved, his apprehensions were not without a cause*.

And now Jeroboam, a man to seize upon any seeming advantages which his situation afforded him, at once enlisted the ancient sympathies of the people, by forthwith rebuilding *Shechem*, which had been burned by Abimelech †, and making it his residence, though he had all the northern tribes among whom to choose; and with similar policy, he proceeded to provide for them a worship of their own, nor would allow that ‘in Jerusalem alone was the place where men ought to worship’—a worship, rather, I think, a gross corruption, than an utter abandonment of the true, the idolatry of the second, more than of the first commandment, though the two offences are very closely

* 1 Kings xii. 1.

† 1 Kings xii. 25.

connected, and almost of necessity run into one another. For I observe, throughout the whole history of the kings of Israel, a distinction made between the sin of Jeroboam and the worship of Baal, somewhat in favour of the former; and that offensive as they both were to the one Eternal, and Invisible God, Baal-worship was the greater abomination. Perhaps, too, it may be added, that this distinction is recognised by the apostle, whose words are, that ‘the glory of the incorruptible God was’—not altogether abjured—but ‘changed into an image, made like unto four-footed beasts*.’ But, however this may be, a worship of their own, independent of the temple, and of the regular priesthood, Jeroboam established, still building upon the religious rites of old time, and accommodating the calendar of his feasts in some

* Rom. i. 23.

measure to that which had existed before* ; and whatever might be his reason for selecting Bethel for one of his calves, whether the holy character of the place itself, or its vicinity to the still holier Shiloh†, whither the people had habitually resorted, I discover a very sufficient reason for his choice of Dan for the other, exclusive of all consideration of local convenience, the curious circumstance, that in this town, there had already prevailed for ages, a form of worship, or of idolatry (I should rather say), very closely resembling that which he now proposed to set up throughout Israel, and furnishing him, if not with a strict precedent, at least with a most suitable foundation on which to work. For in this town stood the teraphim, or images of Micah, whatever might be their shape, which the original

* 1 Kings xii. 32.

† Judges xxi. 19.

founders of Dan had taken with them, and planted there ; and a priesthood there was to minister to these images, precisely like that of Jeroboam, not of the sacerdotal order, for they were sons of Manasseh ; and thus was there an organised system of dissent from the national church, existing in the town of Dan, ‘ all the time that the House of God was in Shiloh* ;’ and thus was accomplished, I suspect, that mysterious prediction of Jacob, ‘ Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse’s heels, so that his rider shall fall backward†.’

On the present occasion, those *undesigned coincidences*, which are the staple of my argument throughout these sermons, have not been presented to you in so perspicuous a manner as they may have been sometimes ;

* Judges xviii. 31.

† Gen. xlix. 17.

for the attention of my hearers has, in this instance, been directed not to one point, singled out of several, but to the details of a continuous history. This I could not avoid. At the same time, these details, on a review of them, will be found to involve many minute coincidences, and those just such as constitute the difference between the best-imagined story in the world, and a narrative of actual facts. For let this be borne in mind, that the sketch which I have offered of the *gradual development* of the schism between Israel and Judah, is by no means an abridgment of the obvious scripture account of it—very far from it.—Looking to that part of scripture which directly relates to this schism, and confining ourselves to that, we might be led to think the rent of the kingdom as sudden and unshaped an event, as the rending of the prophet's mantle,

which was its type: for here, as elsewhere, the history is rapid and abrupt. What I have offered is, strictly speaking, a *theory*; a theory by which a great many loose and scattered data, such as scripture affords to a diligent inquirer, and to no other, are, with much seeming consistency, combined into a whole; it is the pattern which gradually comes out, when the many-coloured threads, gleaned up as we have gone along, are worked into a web.

I. For instance—I can conceive it very possible, without claiming to myself any peculiar sagacity, for a man to read, and not inattentively either, the sacred books from Joshua to Chronicles, and yet never happen to be struck with the fact that Ephraim was a leading tribe; that it was the head, allowed or understood, of an easy confederacy; the thing is scarcely to

be discovered but by the apposition of many passages, dispersed through these books, bearing, perhaps, little or no relation to one another, except that of having a common bias towards this one point. The same may be said of the main cause of this comparative superiority of Ephraim, the accidental, as some would call it,—as we will call it, the providential establishment of the Tabernacle within its borders. The circumstance of Shiloh being the place whither all Israel went up to worship for three centuries and more, all important as it was to the tribe whom it concerned, is not *put forward* either as accounting for the prosperity of Ephraim above its fellows, whilst in Ephraim the Ark stood ; or for the jealousy which it discovered towards Judah, when to Judah the Ark had been transferred ; nor yet as being the natural means by which the remarkable

words of Jacob (surely the prophet, and not the poet in that hour) were brought to pass, touching the future pre-eminence of Ephraim and Judah, howbeit, as tribes, they were then but in the loins of their fathers. So far from this, when in the Book of Joshua we are told that the Tabernacle was set up in *Shiloh*, not a syllable is added by which we can guess where Shiloh was, whether in Ephraim or elsewhere* ; and it is only after some investigation, and by inference at last, that in Ephraim we can fix it.

II. The same is true of the league between Benjamin and Judah. What were the sympathies beyond mere proximity, which cemented them so firmly, is altogether a matter for ourselves to unravel, if unravel it we can. We see them, indeed, acting in concert, as we also see the other tribes

* Josh. xyiii. 1.

acting, but the books of scripture enter into no explanations in either case. Nevertheless, I find in one place, that Saul, the first king, was of Benjamin, and in another, that David, the second king, was of Judah, with a prospect of a continuance of the succession in that line; and here I perceive a mutual sympathy likely to spring out of the exclusive honours of the two royal tribes. Elsewhere, I find that the two royal houses of Saul and David were united by marriage, and here I detect a further approximation. I look again, and learn that a temple was built for national worship in a city, which one text places in Judah, and a parallel text places in Benjamin, leaving me to infer (as was the fact) that the city was on the confines of both, and that upon the confines of both (as was also the fact) the foundations of the temple were laid. In these, and

perhaps in other similar matters, which might be enumerated, I certainly do discover *elements* of union, however the writers, who record them, may never speak of them as such.

III. Again; the motives which operated with Jeroboam in the selection of Shechem for his residence, or of Dan for his idolatry, are not even glanced at, though, in either instance, reasons there were, we have seen, to make the choice judicious. And whilst we are told that he fled from Solomon, when the conspirator was detected in him, or when Ahijah's prophecy awakened the monarch's fears, and went into Egypt, and that from Egypt, at the death of Solomon, he hasted back to take his part in those stirring times, no hint, the most remote, is thrown out, that his sojourn in that idolatrous land, and the peculiar nature of its

idolatry, influenced him in the choice of a *calf* for the representative of his own God, though the one fact does very curiously corroborate the other, and still adds credibility to the whole history.

In all this, I discover much of coincidence, nothing of design. I see an extraordinary revolution asserted, and then my eyes being opened, I perceive that the seeds of it, not however described as such, and often so small as to be easily overlooked, had been cast upon the waters generations before. I see coalitions and convulsions in the body politic of Israel, and I find, not without some pains-taking, and after all but in part, attractive or repulsive principles at work in that body, which, without being named as causes, do account for such effects. I see both in persons and places, so soon as I become intimately acquainted with their several

bearings, something appropriate to the events with which they are connected, though I see nothing of the kind at first, because no such propriety appears upon the surface. These I hold to be the characters of truth, and the history upon which they are stamped, I accordingly receive, nothing doubting—meanwhile, not failing to remark, and to admire, the silent transition of events into those very channels which Jacob in spirit had declared ages before; and to acknowledge, without attempting fully to understand, the mysterious workings of that Controlling Power, which can make men its instruments without making them its tools; at once compelling them to do His will, and permitting them to do their own; proving himself faithful, and leaving them free.

LECTURE VI.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 1.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

It is my intention, in this sermon, to offer to your notice some observations on the condition of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, whether political or religious, as it was affected by their separation. I shall confine myself, however, to such as bear upon the question of *evidence* to the truth of the history.

I. ‘ And Baasha, King of Israel,’ we read, ‘ went up against Judah, and built *Ramah*, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa King of Judah*.’

Ramah seems to have been a border town,

* 1 Kings xv. 17.

between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and to have stood in such a position, as to be the key to either. The King of *Israel*, however, was the party anxious to fortify it, not the King of Judah; indeed, the latter, as we learn from the *Chronicles**, did his best to frustrate the efforts of Baasha, and succeeded, apparently not desirous of having Ramah converted into a place of strength, though it should be in his own keeping; for Asa having contrived to draw Baasha away from this work, does not seize upon it and complete it for himself, but contents himself with carrying off the stones and the timber, and using them elsewhere. It is evident, therefore, that it was an object with the kings of Israel, that this strong frontier post should be established,—with the kings of Judah that it should be removed. Now

* 2 Chron. xvi. 6.

this is singular, when we remember, that after the schism, the numerical strength lay vastly on the side of Israel, one hundred and eighty thousand men being all that Judah could then count in his ranks*, whereas eight hundred thousand were actually produced a few years afterwards by Jeroboam, and even then, he was not what he had been†. It was to be expected, therefore, that the fear of invasion would have been upon Judah alone, the weaker state, and that, accordingly, Judah would have gladly taken, and kept possession of a fortress which was the bridle of the kingdom on that side, and have made it strong for himself. Yet, as we have seen, the fact was quite the other way. How is this to be explained? By a single circumstance, which accounts for a great deal besides this; though the

* 1 Kings xii. 21.

† 2 Chron. xiii. 3.

explanation presents itself in the most incidental manner imaginable, and without the smallest reference to the particular case of Ramah.

In the twelfth chapter of the first Book of Kings, I read (v. 20), that ‘ Jeroboam said in his heart, now shall the kingdom return to the house of David, if this people go up to sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem;’ and that accordingly he set up a worship of his own in Bethel and Dan.

In the eleventh chapter of the second Book of Chronicles, I read (v. 14) that ‘ he cast off the Levites’ (as indeed it was most natural that he should) ‘ from executing the priest’s office,’ and ordained him priests after his own pleasure. I read further, that in consequence of this subversion of the Church of God, ‘ the priests and the Levites that

were in all *Israel*, resorted unto Judah, out of all their coasts;' nor they only, the ministers of God, who might well migrate, but that 'after them out of *all the tribes of Israel*, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of their fathers; so they strengthened' (it is added) 'the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, strong' (v. 16, 17). The son of Nebat was a great politician in his own way, but he had yet to learn, that by righteousness is a nation really exalted, and that its righteous citizens are those by whom the throne is in truth upheld. These he was condemned to lose; these he and his ungodly successors were to see gradually waste away before their eyes; depart from a kingdom founded in iniquity; and transfer their allegiance to another and a better soil. Hence the natural solicitude of *Israel* to put

a stop to the alarming drainage of all that was virtuous out of their borders, and the clumsy contrivance of a fortification at Ramah for the purpose; as though a spirit of uncompromising devotion to God, happily, the most unconquerable of things, was to be coerced by a barrier of bricks. Hence, too, the no less natural solicitude of Judah to remove this fortification, Judah being desirous that no obstacle, however small, should be opposed to the influx of those virtuous Israelites, who would be the strength of any nation wherein they settled. Here I find a coincidence of the most satisfactory kind, between the *building of Ramah by Israel, the overthrow of it by Judah, and the tide of emigration which was setting in from Israel towards Judah*, by reason of Jeroboam's idolatry. Yet the relation of these events to one another, is not expressed in the history,

nor are the events named under the same head, or in the same chapter.

II. Nor is this all. Still keeping in mind this single consideration, that the more godly of the people of the ten tribes were disgusted at the calves, and retired, we may at once account for the progressive *augmentation* of the armies of Judah, and the corresponding *decrease* of the armies of Israel, which the subsequent history of the two kingdoms casually, and at intervals, displays.

Immediately after the separation, Rehoboam assembled the forces of his two tribes, and found them, as I have said, one hundred and eighty thousand men. Some eighteen years afterwards, Ahijah, his son, was able to raise against Jeroboam (who still, however, was vastly stronger) four hundred thousand*. This is a considerable step. Some

* 2 Chron. xiii. 3,

six or seven years later, Asa, the son of Ahijah, is invaded by a countless host of Æthiopians. On this occasion, notwithstanding the numbers which must have fallen already in the battle with Jeroboam, he brings into the field five hundred and eighty thousand: so rapidly were the resources of Judah on the advance. About two and thirty years later still, the army of Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, consists of one million, one hundred and sixty thousand men*; a prodigious *increase* in the population of the kingdom of Judah.

On the other hand, we may trace (the act, it must be observed, is altogether our own, no such comparison being instituted in the history) the gradual decay and *depopulation* of the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam himself, we have found, was eight hundred

* 2 Chron. xvii. 14—18.

thousand strong. The continual diminution of this national army, we cannot, in the present instance, always trace from actual numbers, as we did in the former ; but from circumstances which transpire in the history, we can trace it by inference. Thus, Ahab, one of the successors of Jeroboam, and contemporary with Jehoshaphat, whose immense armaments we have seen, is threatened by Benhadad and the Syrians. Benhadad will send men to take out of his house, and out of the houses of his servants, whatever is pleasant in their eyes*. It is the insolent message of one who felt Israel to be weak, and being weak, to invite aggression. Favoured by a panic, Ahab triumphs for the once ; but at the return of the year, returns Benhadad. Ahab is warned of this long before. ‘ Go strengthen thyself,’ is the

* 1 Kings xx. 6.

friendly exhortation of the prophet (v. 22);—no doubt he did so, to the best of his means, but after all, ‘when the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them, the children of Israel pitched before the Syrians like *two little flocks of kids*, but the Syrians filled the country’ (v. 27). And in Joram’s days, the son and successor of Ahab, such was the boldness of Syria, and the weakness of Israel, that the former was constantly sending marauding parties, ‘companies,’ as they are called, or ‘bands*,’ into Israel’s quarters, sometimes taking the inhabitants captive, and sometimes even laying siege to considerable towns†. And in the reign of Jehu, the next king, Syria, with Hazael at its head, crippled Israel still more terribly, actually seizing upon all the land of Jordan east-

* 2 Kings v. 2 ; vi. 2, 3 ; xiii. 21.

† Kings vi. 14, 23.

ward, Gilead, the Gadites, the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroar to Bashan*. And to complete the picture, the whole army of Jehoahaz, the next in the royal succession of Israel, consisted of fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot, Syria having exterminated the rest†; so gradually was Israel upon the decline.

Now it must be remembered, in order that the force of the argument may be felt, that no parallel of the kind we have been drawing is found in the history itself; no invitation to others to draw one; the materials for doing so it does indeed furnish, dispersed, however, over a wide field, and less definite than might be wished, were our object to ascertain the relative strength of the two kingdoms with exactness; that however it is not; and the very circumstance,

* 2 Kings x. 33.

† 2 Kings xiii. 7.

that the gradual growth of Judah, and declension of Israel, are sometimes to be gathered from other facts than positive numerical evidence, is enough in itself to show that the historian could have no *design* studiously to point out the coincidence of facts with his casual assertion, that the Levites had been supplanted by the priests of the calves, and that multitudes had quitted the country with them, in just indignation.

III. There is still another coincidence which falls under the same head.

In the fifteenth chapter of the first Book of Kings, (v. 28) I read that ‘ Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him (i. e. Nadab the son of Jeroboam) at *Gibbethon*, which belonged to the *Philistines*, for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to *Gibbethon*.’

It appears then that Gibbethon, situated in the tribe of Dan, had by some means or other fallen into the hands of the Philistines, and that the forces of Israel were now engaged in recovering possession of it. It may seem a very hopeless undertaking, at this time of day, to ascertain the circumstances of which an enemy availed himself, in order to gain possession of a particular town in Canaan, near three thousand years ago. Yet, perhaps, the investigation, distant as it is, is not desperate—for in the twenty-first chapter of Joshua, (v. 23) I find Gibbethon and her suburbs mentioned as a city of the *Levites*. Now Jeroboam, we have heard, drove all the Levites out of Israel: what then can be more probable, than that Gibbethon, being thus suddenly evacuated, the Philistines, a remnant of the old enemy, still lurking in the country, and ever ready to rush in where-

ever there was a breach, should have spied an opportunity in the defenceless state of Gibbethon, and claimed it as their own*? It is indeed far from improbable, that this story of Gibbethon is that of many other *Levitical* cities throughout Israel; that this is but a glimpse of much similar confusion, misery, and intestine tumult, by which that kingdom was now convulsed; and though

* That the Philistines were thus dispersed over the land may be gathered from many hints in Scripture; even in the kingdom of Judah they were to be found, much more in Israel. 'Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and tribute silver,' 2 Chron. xvii. 11. Probably the miscreants mentioned 1 Kings xv. 12, whom Asa expelled, and those mentioned xxii. 46, whom Jehoshaphat his son drove out, and those again mentioned 2 Kings xxiii. 7 who were established even at Jerusalem, whom Josiah cast out, were all of this nation. And there still were Hittites somewhere at hand, who had even kings of their own, 1 Kings x. 29, 2 Kings vii. 6; and we read of a land of the Philistines, where the Shunamitess sojourned during the famine, 2 Kings viii. 2—all evident tokens, that a considerable body of the primitive inhabitants of Palestine still dwelt in it.

a solitary fact in itself, a type of many more —and thus, in another way, did the profane act of Jeroboam operate to the downfall of his kingdom, and fatally eat into its strength.

Whether I am right in this conjecture, it is impossible to tell; the case does not admit of positive decision either way; but, certainly, the grounds upon which it rests are, to say the least, very specious; and if they are sound, as I think they are, I cannot imagine a point of harmony more complete, or more undesigned, than that which we have found between these half dozen words touching Gibbethon, a Levitical city, lapsing into the hands of the Philistines, and the expulsion of the Levites out of Israel by the sin of Jeroboam.

IV. Nor is this all. There is another and a still more valuable coincidence yet, con-

nected with this part of my subject; more valuable, because involving in itself a greater number of particulars, and, therefore, more liable to a flaw, if the combination was artificial. When Elijah has worked his great miracle on the top of Carmel, and kindled the sacrifice by fire from heaven, he has to fly from Jezebel for his life, who swears that, by the morrow, she will deal with him, as he had dealt with the Prophets of Baal, her god, and slay him *. Now when it was so common a practice, as we have seen, for the godly amongst the people of Israel to betake themselves to Judah in their distress, there to worship the God of their Fathers without scandal and without persecution, it seems obvious that this was the place for Elijah to repair unto;—the most appropriate, for it was because he had been very jealous for the

* 1 Kings xviii. 40 ; xix. 2.

Lord that he was banished—the most convenient, for no other was so near; he had but to cross the borders, one would think, and he was safe. Yet neither on this occasion, nor yet during the three preceding years of drought, when Ahab sought to lay hands upon him, did Elijah seek sanctuary in *Judah*. First he hides himself by the brook Cherith, which is before Jordan*; then at ‘Zarephat, which belongs to Zidon;’ and though he does at last, when his case seems desperate, and his hours are numbered by Jezebel’s sentence, ‘come in haste to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to *Judah* †,’ still it is after a manner which bespeaks his reluctance to set foot within that territory,

* It is true that there is great difference of opinion as to the situation of this brook Cherith; but from the direction given to Elijah, being to turn *Eastward*, when he was to go there, he being at the time in Samaria, it is clear that it could not be in Judah. —Consult Lightfoot, v. ii. 318, fol.

† 1 Kings, xix. 3.

even more, than if he had evaded it altogether. Tarry he will not; he separates from his servant, probably for the greater security of both; goes a day's journey into the wilderness, and forlorn, and spirit-broken and alone, begs that he may die; then he wanders away, being so taught of God, forty days and forty nights, till he comes to Horeb, the Mount of God, and there conceals himself in a cave. Now all this is at first sight very strange and unaccountable; strange and unaccountable, that the Prophet of God should so studiously avoid Judah, the people of God, governed, as it then was, by Jehoshaphat, a prince who walked with God*,—Judah being of all others a shelter the nearest and most convenient. How is it to be explained?

I doubt not by this fact; that Jehosha-

* 2 Kings xxii. 43.

phat king of Judah had already married, or was then upon the point of marrying, his son Jehoram to *Athaliah, the daughter of this very Ahab, and this very Jezebel*, who were seeking Elijah's life *; his, therefore, was not now the kingdom in which Elijah could feel that a residence was safe; for by this ill-omened match (such it proved) the houses of Jehoshaphat and Ahab were so strictly identified, that we find the former, when solicited by Ahab to join him in an expedition against Ramoth Gilead, expressing himself in such terms as these: 'I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses †;' and in allusion, as it should seem, to this fraternity of the two kings, Jehoshaphat is in one place actually called 'King of Israel ‡.'

* 2 Kings viii. 18. 2 Chron. xviii. 1.

† 1 Kings xxii. 4.

‡ 2 Chron. xxi. 2.

It may be demonstrated that this fatal marriage (for such it was in its consequences) was, at any rate, contracted not later than the tenth or eleventh of Ahab's reign, and it might have been much earlier; whilst these scenes in the life of Elijah could not have occurred within the first few years of that reign, seeing that Ahab had to fill up the measure of his wickedness after he came to the throne, before the Prophet was commissioned to take up his parable against him. I mention these two facts, as tending to prove that the exile of Elijah could not have fallen out long, if at all, before the marriage; and therefore that the latter event, whether past or in prospect, might well bear upon it. I say that it may be proved that this marriage was not later than the tenth or eleventh of Ahab—for

1. Ahaziah, the fruit of the marriage, the

son of Jehoram and Athaliah, began to reign in the *twelfth* year of Joram, son of Ahab, king of Israel*.

2. But Joram began to reign in the *eighteenth* year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah †

3. Therefore, the *twelfth* of Joram would answer to the *thirtieth* of Jehoshaphat, (had the latter reigned so long; it did, in fact, answer to the seventh of Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat ‡; but, there is no need to perplex the computation by any reference to this reign;) and accordingly Ahaziah must have begun his reign in what would correspond to the *thirtieth* of Jehoshaphat.

4. But he was twenty-two when he began it. Therefore he must have been born about the *eighth* year of Jehoshaphat; and consequently the marriage of Jehoram

* 2 Kings xxv. 25, 26.

† 2 Kings iii. 1.

‡ Comp. 2 Kings iii. 1; viii. 18.

1 Kings xxii. 42.

and Athaliah, which gave birth to him, must have been contracted at least as early as the sixth or seventh of Jehoshaphat.

5. Now Jehoshaphat began to reign in the *fourth* of Ahab, king of Israel; therefore the marriage must have been solemnized as early as the tenth or eleventh of Ahab—how much earlier it was solemnized in fact, we cannot tell; but the result is extremely curious; and without the most remote allusion to it on the part of the sacred Historian, as being an incident in any way governing the movements of Elijah, it does furnish, when we are once in possession of it, a most satisfactory explanation of the shyness of Elijah to look for a refuge in a country where, almost under any other circumstances, it was the most natural he should have sought one; and, where, at any other time, since the

division of the kingdoms, he certainly would have found not only a refuge, but a welcome.

Surely if truth is not here, all belief in the worth of circumstantial evidence must be renounced. But I am persuaded that here truth is, and that this history of Elijah, strange and striking as much of it is, is no cunningly-devised fable, for no fable, however cunningly devised, could sustain a scrutiny such as this to which we are submitting it ; but that it is a veritable history of a real character ; and if so, a history in itself sufficient to prove that the Lord was at that time, at least, abroad amongst his chosen people ; showing amongst them tokens by the hands of his prophets, that verily there was a God in Israel ; and that, in preserving the records of that people, he is still holding up to us, on whom the ends of the world are come, a memorial of this

manifestation of his power upon earth in the old times before us ; such as must convince us, that however, in this our day, he may think fit to shroud those more outward and visible signs of his presence amongst us, he is still not far from any of us—he is still very nigh us all—he is still ready, in his own appointed way, (that way not the less *his*, because it may be less extraordinary than heretofore,) to protect us from harm, and deliver us from evil, as he protected and delivered this his prophet, if, like this his prophet, we acknowledge him, and no other, for our God ; he is still ready to feed us with food convenient for us, to whatever strait we may be reduced, as he fed him in that great dearth, if we trust in Him ; he is still ready to translate us, as he translated him to his kingdom above, if we walk with Him in his kingdom here below ; not indeed in

the chariot of fire, but by some ministering angel, perhaps, that now beholds the face of our Father, and will wait unseen at our couch of death, to convey our souls, if righteous they be, ‘that day unto Paradise’—and finally, he is ready to bring us in spirit, as he brought him, the Elias, in spirit, to hold a more intimate communion than we can do in the flesh, with our transfigured Lord, and to dwell with Jesus for ever in the Tabernacle on the mount, which He hath made for us.

LECTURE VII.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 1.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

IN my last sermon, I laid before you some arguments for the truth of that remarkable portion of scripture which tells the history of the great prophet Elijah, and I showed, that, on comparing some of the reputed events of his life with the political and domestic state of his country at the time, the reality of those events was established beyond all reasonable doubt. But I have not yet done with this part of my subject, and I press on your notice once again, as I have repeatedly pressed it before, the consideration that these casual indications of truth, found in the very midst of miracles the most striking,

do give great support to the credibility of those miracles ; that the portions of the history on which these seals of truth are set, do combine with the other, and more extraordinary portions so intimately, that if the former are to be received, the latter cannot be rejected without extreme violence and laceration of the whole ; that standing or falling, they must stand or fall together.

I. I spoke before of the flight of Elijah, and gave my reasons for believing it. I speak now of a trifling incident in that magnificent scene, which is said to have been the prologue to his flight. This it is. Twelve barrels of water, at the command of the prophet, are poured upon the sacrifice, and fill the trench. But is it not a strange thing, that at a moment of drought so intense, when the king himself, and the governor of his house, trusting the business to no

inferior agent, actually undertook to examine with their own eyes the watering-places throughout all the land, dividing it between them, to see if they could save the remainder of the cattle alive*; when the prophet had been long before compelled to leave Cherith, because the brook was dried up, and for no reason else, and to crave at the hands of the widow-woman of Zarephath, whither he had removed, though a land of danger to him, a little water in a vessel that he might drink; is it not, I say, a gross oversight in the sacred writer, to make Elijah, at such a time, give order for this wanton waste of water above all things, whereof scarcely a drop was to be found to cool the tongue; and not only so, but to describe it as forthcoming at once, apparently without any search made, an ample and abundant reservoir? How can

* 1 Kings xviii. 5.

these things be? Let us but remember the local position of Carmel, that it stood upon the *coast*, as an incidental remark in the course of the narrative testifies (v. 43), that the water was therefore probably *sea-water*, and all the difficulty disappears. But the historian does not trouble himself to satisfy our surprise, being altogether unconscious that he has given any cause for it; he, honest man as he was, tells his tale, a faithful one as he feels, and the objection which we have alleged, and which a single word would have extinguished, he leaves to shock us as it may, nothing heeding. But would not an impostor have preserved the keeping of his picture better, and been careful not to violate seeming probabilities by this prodigal profusion of water, whilst his action was laid in a miraculous drought, for the removal of which, indeed, this very sacrifice

was offered—or, if of these twelve barrels he must needs speak, by way of silencing all insinuation, that the whole was a scene got up, and that fire was secreted, would he not have studiously told us, at least, that the water was from the sea which lay at the foot of Carmel, and thus have guarded himself against sceptical remark? Now when I see this momentous period of Elijah's ministry compassed in on every side with tokens of truth so satisfactory; when I see so much in his history established as matter of fact, am I to consider all that is not so established, merely because materials are wanting for the purpose, as matters of fiction only? Or, taking my stand upon the good faith with which his flight, at least, is recorded, an incident which, in itself, I look upon as proved beyond all reasonable doubt in my last sermon; or upon the good faith

with which his challenge at Carmel is recorded, an incident not unsatisfactorily confirmed in this sermon; or rather upon the veracity of both facts, shall I not feel my way along from the prophet's recoil on setting foot in Judah, to the anger of Jezebel, with whom Judah was then in close alliance; from this anger of hers, to the cause assigned for it in the slaughter of her priests; from the slaughter of her priests, to the authority by which he did the deed, himself a defenceless individual, in a country full of the inveterate worshippers of the God of those priests; and thus, finally, shall I not ascend to the mighty miracle by which that authority was conveyed to him, God, in pledge thereof, touching the mountain, that it smoked?

II. A word upon the marriage of which I spoke. Evil was the day for Judah, when

the son of Jehoshaphat took for a wife the daughter of Ahab, and of Jezebel, ten times the daughter. Singular, indeed, is the hideous resemblance of Athaliah to her mother, though our attention is not at all directed to the likeness; and were the fidelity of the history staked upon the few incidents in it, which relate to this female-fiend, it would be safe—so characteristic are they of the child of Jezebel—the same thirst for blood; the same lust of dominion, whether in the state, or the household; the same unfeminine influence over the kings their husbands; Jezebel, the setter up of Baal in Israel; Athaliah in Judah; those bitter fountains, from which disasters innumerable flowed to either kingdom, preparing the one for a Shalmanezar, the other for a Nebuchadnezzar. But this by the way. Whatever might be the motive which induced so

good a prince as Jehoshaphat to sanction this alliance; whether, indeed, it was of choice, and in the hope of re-uniting the two kingdoms, which is probable; or whether it was of compulsion, the act of an impetuous son, and not his own, for he was evidently embarrassed by his children, and, there is reason to suspect, was by this eventually supplanted in his throne*, certain it is, that it proved a sad epoch in the fate and fortunes of Judah; a calamity almost as withering in its effects upon that kingdom, as the sin of Jeroboam had been upon his own. Up to the time of Jehoshaphat, Judah had prospered exceedingly; henceforward, there is a taint of Baal introduced into the blood royal, and a curse for a long time, though not without intermissions, seems to rest upon the land. The even

* 2 Chron. xxiii. 3, 4.

march with which the two kingdoms now advance hand in hand is early seen ; they were now bent upon grinding at the same mill, and a remarkable instance of coincidence without design here presents itself, which the general observations I have been making may serve to introduce.

1. *Ahaziah*, the son of Ahab, I read *, began to reign over Israel in Samaria, in the *seventeenth* year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah.

2. But Jehoram, the son of Ahab, began to reign over Israel in Samaria, in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, his brother Ahaziah being dead †.

3. Elsewhere, however, it is said that this Jehoram, the son of Ahab, began to reign in the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah ‡.

4. Therefore, the second year of Jehoram

* 1 Kings xxii. 51. † 2 Kings iii. 1. ‡ 2 Kings i. 17.

son of Jehoshaphat, must have corresponded with the eighteenth of Jehoshaphat; or, in other words, *Jehoram* must have begun to reign in the *seventeenth* of Jehoshaphat.

I fear there may be some difficulty in following these details, when thus orally expressed; but I have run rapidly through them, because I am unwilling to forego the advantage which my argument derives from the intricate nature of its details. It is obvious that the maze of dates and names thus brought together from various places in Scripture, through which that argument is to be pursued, renders all contrivance, collusion, or packing of facts, for the purpose of supporting a conclusion, utterly impossible. Now the result of the whole is this, that *Ahaziah*, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, and *Jehoram*, the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, both began to reign in *the same*

year, in the respective kingdoms of their fathers, *their fathers being nevertheless themselves alive, and active Sovereigns at the time.* Is there anything by which this simultaneous adoption of these young men, to be their father's colleagues, can be accounted for? An identity, so remarkable in the proceedings of the confederate kingdoms, can scarcely be accidental. Let us then endeavour to ascertain, what event was in progress in the *seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat*, the year in which the two appointments were made.

Now Jehoshaphat began to reign in the fourth of Ahab *. But Ahab died in the great battle against Ramoth-Gilead, having reigned twenty-two years †; he died therefore in the eighteenth of Jehoshaphat.

Accordingly, in the *seventeenth* of that

* 1 Kings xxii. 41.

† 1 Kings xvi. 29.

monarch, the year in which we are concerned, the two kings were preparing to go up against Ramoth,—a measure, upon which they did not venture without long and grave deliberation, concentration of forces, application to Prophets touching their prospects of success*.

But when they approached this hazardous enterprise in a spirit so cautious, can anything be more probable, than that each monarch should then have made his son a partner of his throne, in order, that during his own absence with the army, there might be one left behind to rule at home, and in case of the father's death in battle, (Ahab did actually fall,) to reign in his stead? There can be little or no doubt that this is the true solution of the case, though the text

* 1 Kings xxii.

itself of the narrative does not contain the slightest intimation that it is so.

III. Such arrangements, indeed, were not unusual in those days and in those countries. Here is a further proof of it, and at the same time a coincidence which is a companion to the last,—for I have no other difficulty in the prosecution of my argument, than that which arises out of a glut of materials, and the fear of oppressing the patience of my hearers,—who will consider however, I trust, the vast importance of the general question; the numbers of the weaker brethren, though they themselves may be strong, and bear with me. For though I could doubtless have chosen for my address to you on this occasion, matter which should have been at once more attractive perhaps to you, and have certainly cost me much less pains to

prepare, than this which I am producing; yet, the intrinsic worth of the argument, I feel, for my own part, to be so great, that I look to leave an impression on the understanding, which may be lasting, and, by God's grace, fruitful, long after the time when any appeal which I could have made to the feelings, however popular and persuasive at the moment, would have lost its force. Therefore I pursue my way, little as may be the opportunity I find of strewing it with flowers.

1. ' In the thirty-seventh year of Joash, king of Judah, began Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, to reign over Israel in Samaria.' So we are told in one passage*. But, in another†, that, ' in the second year of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, reigned Amaziah, the son of Joash, king of Judah.'

* 2 Kings xiii. 10.

† 2 Kings xiv. 1.

2. Therefore, Amaziah, king of Judah, reigned in the *thirty-ninth* of Joash, king of Judah.

3. Now we learn from a passage in the second Book of Chronicles*, that ‘Joash reigned *forty* years in Jerusalem.’

4. Therefore Amaziah must have begun to reign one year at least, before the death of his father Joash.

Can we discover any reason for this? The clue will be found in a parenthesis of half a line, which the following paragraph in the Chronicles presents. ‘And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him (Joash), and they came to Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people. And when they were departed from him (*for they left him in great diseases,*) his own servants conspired

* 2 Chron. xxiv. 1.

against him, for the blood of the sons of Jehoiadah the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died *.

The *great diseases* therefore under which, it seems, Joash was labouring at the moment of the Syrian invasion, presents itself as the probable cause why Amaziah his son, then in the flower of his age, was admitted to a share in the government a little before his time. Yet how circuitously do we arrive at this conclusion! The Book of Kings alone would not establish it; the Book of Chronicles alone would not establish it. From the former, we might learn when Amaziah began to reign; from the latter, when Joash, the father of Amaziah died; and accordingly, a comparison of the two dates would enable us to determine that the reign of Amaziah began before that of

* 2 Chron. xxiv. 23, 24.

Joash ended ; but neither document asserts the fact that the son did reign conjointly with the father. We infer it, that is all. Neither does the Book of Kings make the least allusion to any accident whatever which rendered this co-partnership necessary ; nor yet the Book of Chronicles directly, only an incidental parenthesis, a word or two in length, intimates that at the time of the Syrian invasion Joash was sick.

I have adduced this coincidence, strong in itself, chiefly in illustration and confirmation of the principles upon which the last proceeded ; the simultaneous and premature assumption of the sceptre, by the sons of Jehoshaphat and Ahab, as compared with the date of the combined expedition of those two kings against Ramoth-Gilead. But I must not dismiss the subject altogether

without calling your attention to the *undesignedness* manifested in either case. Nothing can be more latent than the congruity, such as it is, which is here found : either history might be read a thousand times without a suspicion that any such congruity was there ; investigation is absolutely necessary for the discovery of it ; patient disembroilment of a labyrinth of names, many being identical, where the parties are not the same ; scrutiny and confusion of dates, seldom so given as to expedite the labours of the inquirer. All this must be done, or these singular tokens of truth escape us, and many, I doubt not, do escape us, after all. What imposture can be here ? What contrivers could be prepared for such a sifting of their plausible disclosures ? What pretenders could be provided with such vouchers ; or having provided them, would

bury them so deep as that they should run the risk of never being brought to light at all, and thus frustrate their own end in the fabrication?

Once more I commit to you facts which speak, I think, to the truth of Scripture, as things having authority ; facts, which afford proof infallible that there is a mine of evidence, ‘ *deep* things of God,’ in this sense, in the sacred writings, which they who look upon them with a hasty and impatient glance—and such very generally is the manner of sceptics, and almost always the manner of youthful sceptics,—leave under their feet unworked ; a treasure hid in a field which they only, who will be at the pains to dig for it, will find ; facts, which give a most comfortable assurance in times like our own, that so long as the gravest question which can enter into the head or heart of

man to examine, even the stability of those documents, which are the foundation of all our immortal hopes, is to be settled by the calm and dispassionate use of reason, neither pleasantry, nor sarcasm, nor sneers, solemn or flippant, nor any other spirit of which the name is Legion, issuing from the gate of Hell, can long or lastingly prevail against it.

But if an investigation, such as this that we are conducting, leads to such a conclusion—to a conclusion, I mean, that there is a substratum of truth running through the Bible, which none can discover but he who will patiently and perseveringly sink the well, at the bottom of which it lies—and such is the conclusion at which we must arrive, I challenge any man who has listened to the proofs which I have advanced, to deny it—is it not a lamentable thing to hear, as we

are sometimes condemned to hear it, the superficial objection, or supercilious scoff, proceeding from the mouth of one, whose very speech bewrays that he has walked over the surface of his subject merely, if even that, and who nevertheless pretends and proclaims that truth he finds not?—How should he find it?—He will only look above ground for that which lies fathoms below. Should it be the ill fortune of any of you—to my younger hearers I venture to offer the warning—to encounter a spirit like this—I am almost ashamed of starting the suspicion of his possible existence in this place, but amongst the ardent aspirants after distinction, here gathered together, there may be three or two, who, in the presumption of their years, or their genius, would lift themselves even to a bad eminence, so that an eminence it be, and hope that scepti-

cism may be mistaken for philosophy—if such a man you encounter, let him not rob you, be his wit what it may, of the simplicity of your faith, such as you received it from your fathers, at whose feet you have sat, or your mothers, at whose knees you have kneeled; a faith, in which that scoffer will probably himself (when you have lost sight of him) one day take refuge, when youthful hardihood shall have given place to mature inquiry, and when the sorrows of life shall have made him afraid.—Let him not rob you of your faith.—Let your instinct protect you, till you have given your reason time and opportunity to protect you better; and if thoughts do arise in your hearts, first put away the evil lusts, and the evil prejudices which would blind your eyes against the truth, and having done this, in God's name, fall to upon the Scriptures, and judge

of them for yourselves. Do they beg of you to spare them?—they dare you to a scrutiny, be your sagacity what it may. Do they flinch from your touch? Nay, they provoke it.—They care not how roughly they be handled, so that it be but honestly;—they implore you to search them—to sift them as wheat—to compare—to explore—to question—to cross-examine—to submit them to whatever fair test you will, and in as many ways as you will;—but they do forbid you, in the name of common sense, and common modesty, and common regard for your own souls, and common reverence for a message, which, at any rate, may be from God unto you, to sit in the seat of the scorner instead of the judge, or lightly to regard, or not to regard at all, a question which is not curious, but awful,—not one of time, but of eternity.

And so may that blessed Lord, who, as we believe, hath caused these Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of his holy word, we may ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he has given us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

LECTURE VIII.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 1.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

I. IN considering the political and religious condition of the two kingdoms after the division, I have looked at the establishment of the calves at Bethel and Dan, by Jeroboam, as a great national epoch ; as a measure pregnant with consequences far more numerous and more important, fetching a much larger compass, and affecting many more interests than its author probably contemplated. I have now to fix upon another event, the wide-wasting effects of which I have already hinted as another national crisis, one which, in the end, most materially influenced the fortunes both of Israel and

Judah; the thing in itself apparently a trifle, but God, says Bishop Hall, ‘lays small accidents as foundations for greater designs;’ I speak of the *marriage between Ahab and Jezebel*.—It is thus announced—‘and it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Eth-Baal, King of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal, in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove—and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him*.’ Here we have the beginning of a new and more pestilent idolatry in Israel. This Zidonian queen corrupts the country to which she is un-

* 1 Kings xvi. 31.

happily translated, with her own rooted heathenish abominations, and priests of Baal, and prophets of Baal, being under her own special protection and encouragement, multiply exceedingly ; and so seductive did the voluptuous worship prove, that, with the exception of seven thousand persons, all Israel had, more or less, partaken in her sin. Jeroboam's calf had been a base and sordid representative of God, but a representative still ; Jezebel's Baal was an audacious rival. Nevertheless, Israel could not find in their hearts to put away the God of their fathers altogether ; and accordingly, we hear Elijah exclaim, ‘ How long halt ye between two opinions ? if the Lord be God, follow him, and if Baal, then follow him*.’ I do not think sufficient notice has been taken of the curious manner in which this sudden ejacu-

* 1 Kings xviii. 21.

lation of the prophet corresponds with a number of unconnected incidents, characteristic of the times, which lie scattered over the Books of Kings and Chronicles. I shall collect a few of them, that it may be seen how well their confronted testimony agreeth together, and how strictly, but undesignedly, they all coincide with that state of public opinion upon religious matters, which the words of Elijah express, a *halting opinion*.

Thus, in this very scene on Mount Carmel, we find, that after the priests of Baal had in vain besought their god to give proof of himself, and it now became Elijah's turn to act, 'he *repaired* the altar of the Lord that was broken down*,' as though here, on the top of Carmel, were the remains of an altar to the true God, (one of those high-

* 1 Kings xviii. 30.

places tolerated, however questionably, by some even of the most religious kings,) which had been superseded by an altar to Baal since Ahab's reign had begun ; the prophet not having to build, it seems, but only to renew. And agreeably to this, we have Obadiah, the governor of Ahab's own house, represented as a man ' who feared the Lord greatly, and saved the prophets of the Lord ;' he, therefore, no apostate, but Ahab, in consideration of his fidelity, winking at his faith ; perhaps, indeed, himself not so much sold to Baal-worship, as sold into the hands of an imperious woman, who would hear of no other. And so ' Ahab served Baal a *little*,' said Jehu, his successor*, another of the equivocal tokens of the times ; whilst the command of this same Jehu, that the temple of Baal should be searched, before the

* 2 Kings x. 18.

slaughter of the idolaters began, lest there should be there any of the *worshippers of the Lord*, instead of the *worshippers of Baal* only, still argues the prevalence of the same half measure of faith. Moreover, the character of the four hundred prophets of Ahab, which, by its contradictions, has so much perplexed the commentators; their number corresponding with that of those who ate at Jezebel's table; their parable, nevertheless, taken up in the *Lord's name*; still their veracity suspected by Jehoshaphat, who asks if 'there be no prophet of the *Lord* besides;' and the mutual ill-will which manifests itself between them and Michaiah; are all very expressive features of the same doubtful mind*. Then the pretence by which Ahab, through Jezebel, takes away the life of Naboth, is '*blasphemy* against God and the

* 1 Kings xviii. 19; xxii. 6—24. 2 Chron. xviii. 10—23.

king,' against the true God, no doubt, the tyrant availing herself of a clause in the Levitical law*; a law which was still, therefore, as it should seem, the law of the land, even in the kingdom of Israel, howbeit standing in the anomalous position of deriving its authority from an acknowledgment of Jehovah alone, and yet left to struggle against the established worship of Baal, too; enough in itself to confound the people, to compromise all religious distinctions, and to ensure a *halting* creed in whatever nation it obtained. Thus, whilst I see the prophets of the Lord cut off under the warrant of Jezebel, and the government of the Lord virtually renounced; at another time I see, as I have said, a man condemned to death for blasphemy against the Lord, under the warrant of Leviticus; and the

* Levit. xxiv. 16.

two sons of an Israelitish woman sold to her creditor for bondsmen, under the same law*; and the lepers shut out at the gate of Samaria, still under the same†, and contrary, as it should appear, to the Syrian practice, for Naaman, though a leper, does not seem to have been an outcast, but to have had servants about him, and to have executed the king's commands, and even to have expected Elisha to come out to him, and put his hand upon the place. What can argue the embarrassment under which Israel was labouring in its religious relations more clearly than all this?—the law of Moses acknowledged to be valid, and its provisions enforced, though its claim to the obedience of the people only rested upon having God for its author; that God whom

* 2 Kings iv. 1. Levit. xxv. 39.

† 2 Kings vii. 3. Levit. xiii. 46; xiv. 3. Numb. v. 23.

Baal was supplanting. Here, I think, is truth: it would have been little to the purpose to produce *flagrant* proofs that the worship of God and the worship of Baal prevailed together in Israel; those might have been the result of contrivance; but it is coincidence, and undesigned coincidence, to find a prophet exclaiming, in a moment of zeal, ‘How long *halt* ye,’ and then to find indications, some of them grounded upon the merest trifles of domestic life, that the people did halt.

II. But this marriage of Ahab and Jezebel, so ruinous to Israel, was scarcely less so to Judah; for in Judah, the same miserable alliance was to be acted over again in the next generation, and with the very same consequences.

Ahab, king of Israel, had taken to himself Jezebel, a heathen, for his wife, and Israel,

through her, became a half-heathen nation. Jeroboam, king of Judah, had taken to himself Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, worthy, in all respects, of the mother who bore her, to be his wife ; and now Judah, in like manner, and for the like cause, fell away. Of Ahab, it is said, ‘ but there was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, *whom Jezebel his wife stirred up**.’ Such were the bitter fruits of his marriage. Of Jehoram, it is said, ‘ and he walked in the ways of the kings of *Israel*, as did the house of Ahab, for the *daughter of Ahab was his wife*, and he did evil in the sight of the Lord†.’ Such in turn was this ill-omened union to him and his—Either of these women, therefore, was the curse of the kingdom over which her husband ruled ; and as we have

* 1 Kings xxi. 25.

† 2 Kings viii. 18.

already seen some of the mischief brought into Israel (faulty enough before) by Jezebel, so shall we now see still more brought into Judah (hitherto a righteous and prosperous people) by Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel. I, however, shall not enter into the subject further than to draw from it what I can of evidence.

And here, before I proceed further, let me notice a circumstance trivial in itself, which tends, however, to establish this reputed alliance of the houses of Jehoshaphat and Ahab, as a matter of fact. There is no more cause indeed for calling this in question, than any other historical incident of an indifferent nature; but still, I am unwilling to let any opportunity pass, of drawing out these tokens of truth, whether significant or not; be the gifts great or small, which are cast into the treasury of evidence, they con-

tribute to swell the amount; they contribute to justify the general conclusion, that truth is still the pervading principle of the sacred writings, in minute as well as in momentous matters, in things which are, or which are not, of a kind to provoke investigation.

I am told then, that a son of the King of Judah marries a daughter of the King of Israel.—Now agreeably to this, for some time afterwards, I discover a marked *identity* of names in the two families, so much so, as to render, whilst it lasts, the contemporary history of the two kingdoms extremely complicated and embarrassing. Thus, Ahab is succeeded by a son *Ahaziah**, on the throne of Israel; and Jehoram is also succeeded by a son *Ahaziah*, (the nephew of the other,) on the throne of Judah†.—Again, Ahaziah,

* 1 Kings xxii. 49.

† 2 Chron. xxii. 1.

King of Israel, dies, and he is succeeded by a *Jehoram**; but a *Jehoram*, the brother-in-law of the former, is at the same moment on the throne of Judah, as his father's colleague†. How much longer this mutual interchange of family names might have continued, it is impossible to tell, for Ahab's house was cut off in the next generation by Jehu, and a new dynasty was set up; but the thing itself is curious, and however our patience may be put to the proof, in disengaging the thread of Israel and Judah at this point of their annals, we have the satisfaction of feeling that the intricacy of the history at such a moment is a very strong argument of the truth of the history. For, although no remark is made upon this identity of names, nor the least hint given as to the cause of it, we at once perceive that it

* 2 Kings i. 17 ; iii. 1.

† 2 Kings i. 17.

may very naturally be referred to the union which is said to have taken place between the houses, and which many circumstances tend to show, however extraordinary it may seem, was a cordial union.

III. I now proceed to consider some of the public consequences of this marriage to Judah.

In the eighteenth verse of the eighth chapter, of the second Book of Kings, we are informed of Jehoram's wickedness, and at whose instigation it was wrought. — In the twenty-second verse, we find it said, (after some account of a rebellion of the Edomites) 'then *Libnah* revolted at the same time.'—No cause is assigned for this revolt of Libnah; the few words quoted, are incidentally introduced, and the subject is dismissed. But in the Chronicles*, a cause is

* 2 Chron. xxi. 10.

assigned, though still in a manner very brief and inexplicit; ‘ the same time, also,’ (so the narrative runs,) ‘ did Libnah revolt from under his hand ; *because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers ;*’ that is, because, at the persuasion of Athaliah, for she, we have found*, was his state-adviser, Jehoram did what Ahab, his father-in-law, had done at the persuasion of the mother of Athaliah, set up a strange god in his kingdom, even Baal. Thus, this supplementary clause, short as it is, may serve, I think, as a clue to explain the revolt of Libnah. For Libnah, it appears from a passage in Joshua, was one of the cities of Judah, given to the *priests*, the sons of Aaron†; no wonder, therefore, that the citizens of such a city should be the first to reject with indignation the authority of a monarch, who was even then setting at

* 2 Kings viii. 18.

† Josh. xv. 42 ; xxi. 13.

nought the God whose servants they especially were, and who was substituting for him, the abomination of the Zidonians. This is the explanation of the revolt of Libnah. Yet, satisfactory as it is, when we are once fairly in possession of it, the explanation is anything but obvious. Libnah, it is said, revolts, but that revolt is not expressly coupled with the introduction of Baal into the country as a god; nor is that pernicious novelty coupled with the marriage of Athaliah; nor is any reason alleged, why *Libnah* should feel peculiarly alive to the ignominy and shame of such an act; for where Libnah was, or what it was, or whereof its inhabitants consisted, are things unknown to the readers of Kings and Chronicles, and would continue unknown, were they not to take advantage of a hint or two in the Book of Joshua.

IV. I am confirmed in the supposition that the revolt of Libnah is correctly ascribed to the indignation of the *Priests* at the worship of Baal, by other circumstances in the history of those times; for many things conspire to show, on the one side, the reckless idolatry of the royal house of Judah, (so true to their God till the blood of the house of Ahab began to run in their veins,) and, on the other side, the general disaffection of the ministers of God, and the desperate condition to which they were reduced. For when the Temple of Jerusalem was to be repaired, which was done by Joash, the grandson of Athaliah*, the effects of her wicked misrule incidentally come out. Not only had the utensils of the Temple been removed to the house of Baal, but its very walls had in many places been

* 2 Chron. xxiv. 4.

broken up, the ample funds put into the hands of the young king being principally devoted, not to decorations, but to the purchase of substantial materials, timber and stones; and from a casual expression touching the rites of the Temple, that ‘there were offered burnt-offerings in the House of the Lord *continually all the days of Jehoiada* *’, it is pretty evident that, whilst Athaliah was in power, even these had been discontinued; that even Judah, the tribe of God’s own choice, even Zion, the hill which he loved, paid him no longer any public testimony of allegiance, the faithful city herself become an harlot. So wanton was the defiance of the most High God, during the reigns of Jehoram, Ahaziah, and the subsequent usurpation of Athaliah, when these her husband and her son were dead.

* 2 Chron. xxiv. 14.

On the other hand, Joash, the rightful possessor of the throne of Judah, an infant plucked from among his slaughtered kindred by an aunt, and saved from the murderous hands of a grandmother, grew up unobserved—where, of all places?—in *the Lord's House*, contiguous as it was to the palace of Athaliah, who little dreamed that she had such an enemy in such a quarter; the High Priest his protector; the Priests and Levites his future partizans; so that when events were ripe for the overthrow of Athaliah, the child was set up as the champion of the Church of God, so long prostrate before Baal, but still not spirit-broken, cast down, but not destroyed; and by that Church, and no party else, was he established; and the unnatural usurper was hurled from her polluted throne, with the shriek of treason upon her lips; and having

lived like her mother, like her mother she died, killed under her own walls, and among the hoofs of the horses *. This, I say, is a very consistent consummation of a resistance, of which the revolt of Libnah, some fourteen years before, was the earnest: in the revolt of Libnah, a city of the Priests, the disaffection of the Priests prematurely breaks out; in the dethronement of Athaliah, achieved by the Priests, that same disaffection finds its final issue; the interval between the two events having sufficed to fill up the iniquity of Baal's worshippers, and to organize a revolt upon a greater scale than that of Libnah, which restored its dues to the Church, and to God his servants, his offerings, and his house.

But will any man say that the sacred historian so ordered his materials, that such

* 2 Kings xi. 16. .

incidents as these which I have named, should successively turn up—that he guided his hands in all this wittingly—that he let fall, with consummate artifice, first a brief and incidental notice (a mere parenthesis) of the revolt of a *single* town, suppressing meanwhile all mention of its peculiar constitution and character, though such as prepared it above others for revolt—that then, after abandoning not only Libnah, but the subject of Judah in general, and applying himself to the affairs of Israel in their turn, he should finally revert to his former topic, or rather to a kindred one, and lay before us the history of a *general* revolt, organized by the Priests ; and all, in the forlorn hope that the uniform working of the same principle of disaffection in the same party, and for the same cause, in two detached instances, would not pass unobserved ; but that such

consistency would be detected, and put down to the credit of the narrative at large? This surely is a degree of refinement much beyond belief.

Thus having traced this singular people through a long and most diversified history, we are come to see planted in both kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the idolatrous principle which was shortly to be the downfall of both. God usually works out his own ends in the way of natural consequence, even his judgments being in general the ordinary fruits of the offences which called for them; and in this instance the calves of Jeroboam and the groves of Baal were the sin, and from the sin were made to flow, as a matter of course, the disgust of all virtuous Israelites, and the intestine divisions resulting from it; the interruption or suspension of all public worship; the mischiefs of a

perpetual conflict between a national code of laws still in force, and national idolatry, no less actually established than the laws ; the depravity of morals which that idolatry encouraged, and which served to sap the people's strength ; all, elements of ruin which only wanted to be developed in order to be fatal, and which in a very few generations did their work.

It is curious to observe how the origin, the progress, and the consummation of the devastating principle, correspond in the two kingdoms.

Israel is the first to offend, both by the sin of Jeroboam and the sin of Ahab ; and Israel is the first to have illustrious Prophets sent to him to counteract the evil, if it were possible,—whom, however, he persecutes or slays ; and Israel is the first to be carried into captivity.

Judah, after some years, follows the example of his rival. Idolatry, even the worst, that of the same Baal, is brought into Judah. Prophets, many and great, are now in turn sent to warn him of the evil to come; but now he too has declared for the groves; and those Prophets he stones, in one instance even between the porch and the altar; and, accordingly, by nearly the same interval as Judah followed Israel in his idolatries, did he follow him in his fate, and went after him to sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon. There is something very coincident in this relative scale of sin and suffering.

It was the office of those prophets, of whom I spoke, not only to foretell things to come, but also to denounce the sins of the times in which they lived; they were censors, as well as seers.—Of the earlier race,

Elijah, Elisha, Ahijah, and others, we have no writings at all, otherwise they would have doubtless offered, in their character as moralists, a mirror of their own age, in their own nation of Israel. Of the latter race, Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and more, we possess the records,—and a very awful picture they one or other present, of the condition of either kingdom, of Judah more especially. Here, therefore, a new scene opens before us; a new, and perhaps nobler field of argument, such as I have been exploring, displays itself. But to trace such allusions to contemporary transactions, as are blended with the Prophecies—to examine how they tally with facts, as we find them set forth in the latter chapters of the books of Kings and Chronicles—to compare the heavy denunciations of those earnest and holy men, and the woes which seem to

encompass them as they write, with the corresponding ruinous disorder into which Israel and Judah (as we gather from the history) had already sunk, or were then sinking—to identify the age of the prophet, by means of some undesigned and oblique coincidence in his parable, with an age, certainly long before that of the events which he is made to predict, and thus to possess ourselves of a more sure word of prophecy, by satisfying ourselves that it was actually what it professed to be, foreknowledge in the party who uttered it;—all this is a fruitful province for investigation, which I must now notice and abandon,—the present not being the time for breaking fresh ground, and that of such a nature as the confirmation of the pretensions of the Prophets; more especially, as the argument which I am handling, if found to be available here too, could only

be so by means of a comparison more than usually *close*, between the prophetical portions of Scripture, and those historical portions which treat of the times in which the Prophets lived. I say more than usually *close*, since the figurative language of the prophets, and the *general* terms in which they are apt to express themselves, might otherwise occasion any casual reference to the incident of the day, such as, if detected, would be a date, to be very easily overlooked. Suffice it to have said thus much; and having now touched the borders of the age of written prophecy, I will here rest, feeling that hitherto my foot has been treading on firm ground, and confident, that were we at leisure to proceed farther, it still need not be drawn back.

But now, after all, there may be those who say within themselves, wherefore this

waste of evidence? Why this perpetual laying of foundations, instead of going on unto perfection? To such I make answer, that, independently of the object to which the lecture which I have undertaken is more especially directed, there is nothing in the character of the times in which our lot is cast, which should lead us to suppose that a word upon the evidences, particularly if possessing any degree of novelty, is a word out of season. And though it may be said, and said with truth, that a spirit of unbelief will, of itself, come to an end, and may be safely left to prove its own vanity, by working out its own dissolution; still, it would be through much suffering that the consummation must be reached, through much bitter and dear-bought experience; and if this alternative can be escaped, it will be well, and if we can learn to be wise in time,

escaped it may be. That soon or late, a spirit of unbelief, however prevalent for the moment, will wither away, I doubt not; because it contains *within* it the elements of its own extinction; and because it is opposed to those great moral influences which govern us from *without*. It is *self-destroying*, from its very discomfort. There we have the strife between open bravery and secret misgiving; the weariness of life for lack of the object which satisfies; the wild excess of passions, to which prudential considerations only are but a feeble check; the imperfect interest which can be taken in the welfare of others, where the sympathy is wanting which binds all together as fellow-members of Christ's Church, fellow-partakers of the benefits of his Cross and Passion, fellow-heirs of his Everlasting Kingdom. This is the *internal* desolation of heart which un-

belief inflicts; these, some of the inbred enemies which insure its eventual overthrow; and so the infidel parent will risk the imputation of insincerity in his unbelief, rather than expose his child to the contagion of principles which, however he may profess them, he feels to have been his own curse. It is opposed from *without*; for if the fool says in his heart, there is no God, he is speedily compelled to acknowledge that the world around him, nay, the temple of his own body, is too fearfully, and wonderfully made, to have been made by chance, and he stands perplexed: if he glories in his health and strength, and seeks no higher pleasures than those of his animal nature, a sickness overtakes him after a while, and his laughter is turned into mourning, and his mirth into heaviness; and, whatever may have been his prejudices before, he now longs to believe in an incorruptible body;

if earthly distinction is his idol, it comes perhaps, but not till it is valueless, when he is old, and cannot enjoy it, when he is solitary, and cannot impart it, and it finds him but too willing to compromise for an humble name, be it but written in heaven : if he has friends and kindred, in whom his soul is bound up, and he desires no better heaven than continued communion with them, death crosses him unawares, and shivers these, his household gods, in pieces, and his heart within him is desolate, and he is driven, in spite of himself, to seek for some more permanent thing on which to spend his affections, than any form in the flesh, however fond, however faithful, and however fair.

Thus are the events of the system, in which we live, perpetually driving us back, as sentinels commissioned so to do, and stationed for the very purpose along the

path of life, whenever we are disposed to start aside from the track which Revelation prescribes, (what stronger argument can there be, that the author of that system, and the author of that Revelation are the same !)

and happy, therefore, are they, who by a proper application of their understandings to the evidences, and a teachable spirit, have the conviction worked in them, in their early years, that Scripture is indeed God's word, and their only guide,—that it is the thing wherewithal a young man may cleanse his way,—and who thus are spared some of those gnawings from within, and those buffetings from without, which must be otherwise their schoolmasters, to lead them, if possible, even through suffering unto Christ. Therefore, let such as are themselves converted, give God thanks, and grudge not the task of strengthening their brethren. Therefore, let them bear with

others who attempt it, and second them by their prayers to Almighty God, that his Spirit, which is wanted to make all preaching fruitful, may go forth with such words as may be soundly spoken, however elementary they may seem,—that it may go forth even with this my argument, which I have now brought to a close—that so, the attention of the thoughtless hearer may be challenged by a weight of evidence for which he was not prepared, his understanding be opened to understand the Scriptures, his meditations be drawn to continue in them, his profiting appear unto all men, till, at length, his inward man by degrees become, as it were, transfigured, and death be to him only a translation.

THE END.



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